

# AL-GHURABÁ

REVISTA DE CONTRA-NARRATIVA PARA LA PREVENCIÓN DE LA RADICALIZACIÓN VIOLENTA DE ETIOLOGÍA YIHADISTA  
FREE COUNTER-NARRATIVE MAGAZINE FOR 'THE PREVENTION' OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM OF JIHADISM ETIOLOGY'

by

CISEG



**20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
11TH OF MARCH 2004 ATTACKS**



# THE 11-M ATTACKS

This special is dedicated to all the victims and individuals affected by the attacks of March 11, 2004, as well as to the actors involved during and after the events.

IN MEMORIAM



Paz por favor. No perder las esperanzas  
non accada mai piu! Mañana saldre de casa como lo he  
Hace falta mucha fantasia para soportar la realidad. V  
aten alatum de suferinta voastra. Non dimentichatemo mai de  
en nuestra alma. No a la violencia. No lagrimas no se  
fuer del mundo. Toca la vida  
de la vida. No se puede vivir sin la vida. No se puede vivir sin la vida.

# AL-GHURABÁ

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## Production and editing

CISEG

## Creators

David Garriga

Marc Fornós

## Editorial Team

David Garriga

Ariadna Trespaderne

Bahae Eddine Boumnina

José C. Prado

Alejandro Cassaglia

## Design and layout

Ariadna Trespaderne

---

## CISEG

[info@intelciseg.com](mailto:info@intelciseg.com)

## Web

[www.alghuraba.org](http://www.alghuraba.org)

## Articles submission

[alghuraba@intelciseg.com](mailto:alghuraba@intelciseg.com)

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# EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

In commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the March 11, 2004 attacks in Madrid, we find ourselves in the need to reflect upon the multiple aspects surrounding this tragic event that marked a turning point in the recent history of Spain and the world. This attack, perpetrated on the rail system of the Spanish capital, left a profound scar on society, and its implications continue to resonate.

The loss of human lives, the suffering of survivors, and the collective trauma created a deep wound in the social fabric. Moreover, it also represented a rupture in the collective perception of security and served as a wake-up call regarding the urgency to address the underlying roots feeding extremism and violence.





Undoubtedly, 11-M stands as a painful reminder of the vulnerability of our societies to the threat of terrorism and violent radicalization.

In this regard, security perspectives and responses to terrorism have undergone significant transformations in public opinion and institutions over these years. The emergence of new threats, the evolution of recruitment methods and terrorist propaganda, as well as technological advancements facilitating the planning and execution of attacks, have necessitated a reassessment of strategies and security policies on a global scale.

This has led to the implementation of stricter security measures, the strengthening of international cooperation in intelligence matters, and the adoption of more proactive preventive strategies. However, substantial challenges persist, as terrorist groups' adaptation to the environment becomes increasingly complex and dynamic.

In this context, criminology and prevention at all stages - primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary - emerge as fundamental tools in the fight against violent radicalization and terrorism. Understanding the individual and contextual factors predisposing to radicalization, early detection of warning signs, timely intervention to deradicalize vulnerable individuals, and the rehabilitation of former combatants are crucial aspects that require a multidisciplinary and coordinated approach among different actors, from security forces to civil society, to continue building a comprehensive and sustainable response to the threat of terrorism.

Since 2017, the Global Intelligence and Security Community has sought to contribute to the free and accessible dissemination of information related to this phenomenon through the Al-Ghurabá magazine, a tool for alternative narratives to prevent violent radicalization within communities through simple publications prepared by specialized analysts. Over the past six years, the non-profit organization CISEG has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to combating violent extremism of jihadist origin. Since its inception, the organization has been a key player in the fight against violent extremism of jihadist origin for years. Our commitment, experience, and dedication have positioned us as a reference in prevention and counter-narratives at both national and international levels, and we are committed to continuing our important work in the years to come.

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We have assembled a team of specialized delegates, each a leader in their field of study related to jihadist terrorism. This diversity of knowledge and experiences has allowed us to address the problem from multiple perspectives, thus ensuring the effectiveness of our actions and strategies.

The diversity in the forms of recruitment of jihadist terrorists varies significantly depending on the country in question. This is due to a variety of factors, including cultural, social, political, economic, and religious differences. Gathering a team of specialized delegates, each a leader in their field of study related to jihadist terrorism, is essential to understand and address these differences effectively.

By addressing the problem of jihadist terrorism from multiple perspectives, our team of specialized delegates can identify the specific roots of radicalization in different contexts and develop effective strategies to counter it. By understanding the diversity of recruitment methods depending on the country where they occur, we can adapt our actions and policies to address the underlying causes of violent extremism and prevent future acts of terrorism.

Over these six years of hard work, we have developed and implemented innovative prevention programs that have reached vulnerable communities throughout our area of influence. These programs range from educational workshops and awareness campaigns to collaborations with Correctional Facilities and Law Enforcement Agencies in developing tools for detecting jihadist violent extremism.

Furthermore, we have tirelessly worked on crafting effective counter-narratives that challenge extremist ideologies and promote values of peace, tolerance, and respect for diversity. Our holistic and multidisciplinary approach has allowed us to adapt to changes in the landscape of jihadist terrorism, always keeping us one step ahead in our fight.

Finally, we want to express our heartfelt gratitude to all the experts who have selflessly shared their experiences and knowledge. Your dedication and generosity have greatly enriched this editorial project, allowing us to offer a deeper and more comprehensive perspective on the events that marked a crucial moment in contemporary history.

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In conclusion, this special issue of the magazine represents a space for reflection twenty years after the attacks that left an immeasurable mark. The twentieth anniversary provides an opportunity to reflect on lessons learned and remaining challenges in the fight against violent radicalization and terrorism, to build safer, more inclusive, and resilient societies for future generations.

This publication constitutes a tribute to the victims and their families, as well as to all the professionals involved during and after the attack.

Sincerely,

*The Editors*

*Dr. David Garriga, President of CISEG*

*Dr. Ariadna Trespaderne, Secretary General of CISEG*

**"Smart Prevention, Peaceful Future:  
Let's Say No to **Violent Radicalism.**"**



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*Un libro de*

# Víctimas de la yihad negra de Dáesh

Contranarrativa para luchar  
por la convivencia y la paz

**Ilham Majure  
David Garriga**



*Ilham Majure y David Garriga*



### Marc Marginedas

Journalist and war correspondent for El Periódico. With over twenty years of experience in the profession, he has covered some of the major wars, uprisings, and conflicts of today, such as Algeria, Chechnya, Darfur, Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, or the Arab revolutions. He has been awarded the Vázquez Montalbán and Cirilo Rodríguez journalism awards, and has captured his experiences as a war correspondent in the book "Journalism on the Battlefield" (RBA, 2013).

Everything happened very quickly. I remember getting out of bed and already having the news very present. I don't know if it was through SMS messages - WhatsApp didn't exist yet - or if it was after turning on the radio. I suppose I immediately headed to the newspaper office and made myself available to the editors-in-chief. When such news happens, an attack on Spanish territory of undetermined origin, the entire staff, regardless of their section, sets aside their usual tasks and focuses on the only news that exists.

I can't remember my reaction when I saw the headline of the special edition of El Periódico, my newspaper, which attributed the massacre to ETA without a shred of doubt, but I did have the feeling that it didn't fit. A wording with such forcefulness meant that the evidence in the hands of our reporters or editors was incontrovertible, and that, due to the short time elapsed, seemed impossible to me. Later, the different phone calls made by the then Prime Minister José María Aznar to the editors of the main Spanish newspapers would come to light, guaranteeing them that he had evidence that it was the work of Basque terrorists, a conversation that led Antonio Franco, the head of my newspaper, to lead the front page in this way.

I do remember, however, the contradiction between all of that and a small column, written and signed by Luis Díez, then a reporter for the Madrid delegation responsible for covering the ministries of the Interior and Defense, in which, according to his sources, everything suggested that it was an act of jihadist terrorism. There were only three days left until the legislative elections, in which the PP, led by Mariano Rajoy, was favored, with the only question being whether they would achieve an absolute majority or not. If that ended up being confirmed, the electoral expectations of the conservatives would be seriously undermined, for a very simple reason: Against all odds, against the opinion of an overwhelming majority of the Spanish population, the Aznar government had supported the invasion of Iraq launched by the US and the UK a year earlier, agreeing to participate with troops in the occupation of the country once Saddam Hussein's regime was overthrown.

The news escalated during that weekend, which I remember spending in the offices of El Periódico, located on Consell de Cent street. The statements of the popular candidate, Mariano Rajoy, condemning the protests of the outraged in front of the party headquarters as the whole truth of the attack was uncovered, sparked a flurry of messages on our phones. "Rajoy wants to declare us illegal," is the message I remember receiving on my phone, Saturday night, hours before the polls opened, sent by my immediate superior, the editor-in-chief of the International section Carlos Enrique Bayo.



The next day, what could be glimpsed materialized, the surprising defeat of the PP at the polls and the arrival of a socialist candidate to Moncloa who many already considered a lost cause: José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. I will never forget the image of Aznar, with a grimace, from the PP headquarters on Génova street, raising with a grimace the hand of the defeated candidate of his party when the election results were known.

In reality, the sequence of dizzying events we had experienced in those days, the desperate attempts at media manipulation initiated by the ruling party, was nothing more than the result, the logical consequence of many of the dysfunctions that we had identified in the months prior by the correspondents and special envoys sent to Iraq to cover the war and post-war launched by the government of President George Bush, a conflict that ultimately resulted in the bloodiest attacks in the history of Spain. The lack of transparency in everything related to the presence of Spanish soldiers in Iraq had been a constant since they were deployed during the summer in the oasis of Diwaniyah, in the center of the Arab country. And the officials in charge of press relations for the contingent never opened their mouths and simply handed us press releases drafted in Madrid and issued by the then Minister of Defense, Federico Trillo.

I remember standing guard outside Abu Ghraib prison, near Baghdad, on a hot autumn morning, after the first reports of prisoner abuse by American jailers had come to light. At that moment, a convoy of several Spanish armored vehicles entered the infamous prison. And when reporters from our country asked the members of the column about the reasons for their visit to the infamous prison, the only response we got was the following phrase: "we come for a walk." Subsequent phone calls to the press relations officers also yielded no results. Spanish soldiers, who were supposedly in Iraq to provide support without participating in actions against the insurgency, visited that torture-ridden facility in an opaque manner.

But in Iraq, the climax of that government's information manipulation policy under Aznar, which would be exposed in all its harshness in the days following the March 11th attacks in Madrid, occurred on January 22, 2004, in Al Hamza, a town in central Iraq, in the midst of the Spanish contingent's responsibility area, then taken over by Iraqi criminals. Gonzalo Pérez García, a commander of the Civil Guard, was seriously injured by a gunshot to the head while on a joint mission with the Iraqi police, an injury that plunged him into a coma and ultimately caused his death days later. Less than two months before the elections, the circumstances of that incident could be very damaging to the PP and its aspirations to renew an absolute majority in the Cortes. From Madrid, the Ministry of Defense attributed the action to "terrorists," which surprised us greatly because our soldiers had been deployed in a predominantly Shiite area where there was no Sunni insurgency.

That late afternoon, three Spanish journalists appeared in Diwaniya: Alberto Masegosa from the Efe agency, Javier Espinosa from El Mundo, and myself. We were handed the press release, with no additional comments, which mentioned the aforementioned "terrorists." However, in conversations with the local police that same day, we managed to find out that the shootout had actually occurred in an operation against common criminals and that the terrorist adjective had been added thousands of kilometers away from the Mesopotamian deserts in the government announcement of the incident. "They were thieves of televisions and furniture," police sources explained to reporter Laura Caro, a special envoy to Iraq for the ABC newspaper, a couple of days later.

The war in Iraq was justified by its perpetrators - and by those who supported them, like the government of our country at the time - through false news that distorted reality to make it digestible to their respective public opinions. Terrorism, the weapons of mass destruction that never existed, were nothing more than elements to create a casus belli that sought to support an unjustified and unprovoked armed aggression against another state.

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Throughout history, countless conflicts have begun with manipulated and artificial methods like that of Iraq, and one doesn't even have to delve into the past to identify them. Because two years after the start of the war in Ukraine, with entire Ukrainian cities destroyed, medieval sieges, and the use of prohibited weapons by Kremlin troops, mass deportations in the occupied Ukrainian areas, theft and relocation of Ukrainian children for reeducation in the Russian Federation, militarization of schools, relentless repression against pacifist movements in Moscow, ultranationalism, and rampant xenophobia, there is no doubt about which side is the brown side in this conflict, as the correspondent Xavier Colás would say. Nor is there any doubt that the "denazification" of the "Kiev regime," an argument put forward by the Kremlin to launch the attack, is as crude a lie as the supposed biological and chemical arsenal that Saddam Hussein supposedly possessed at the beginning of this century.



### **Luis de la Corte Ibáñez**

PhD in Psychology, full professor in the Department of Social Psychology and Methodology at the Autonomous University of Madrid, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Institute of Forensic Sciences and Security at the same university. He has collaborated with various public and private institutions, including the Higher Center for National Defense Studies (where he serves as a lecturer in the Staff Course), Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, Training and Doctrine Command of the Spanish Army, Training and Development Division of the National Police Corps, Technical Unit of the Civil Guard's Judicial Police, Diplomatic School, Royal Elcano Institute for Strategic and International Studies, Chair of Intelligence Services and Democratic Systems at King Juan Carlos University, and the Queen Sofia Center for Studies on Violence.

Like many Spaniards, I first heard about the March 11 attacks at home, in Madrid. I remember well the initial impressions that came to me, a mixture of concern, uncertainty, and relative calm. Above all, concern for the victims who could have been affected by the explosions. Uncertainty because the initial reports about an attack are always confusing and imprecise, and it's not easy to extract a clear idea from them about the magnitude of the damage caused: it wasn't clear how many people could have been affected by the attack. There was also a sense of strangeness, though relative. During those years, we were still exposed to the threat of ETA, and like all Spaniards of my age and previous generations, I had grown up hearing news about terrorist attacks. That experience, which was at the root of my personal and professional interest in terrorism, had turned terrorist acts themselves into another element of our informational diet and a sad daily reality. What surprised me a bit was that the attacks had been carried out against several commuter trains (I didn't remember any similar precedent in Spain, although later I remembered that there had been in France, in 1995...) and also the explosions in different locations. It was a sophisticated, complex, and indiscriminate attack, prepared to maximize the number of victims. By then, I had been studying terrorist phenomena, writing about it, and paying special attention to jihadist terrorism for several years, which had changed the world so much following the September 11, 2001 attacks, so lethal and impressive for various reasons.

Of course, in those first hours, while following the news about the attacks and becoming aware of the horror unleashed at Atocha and the other stations affected by the explosions, I spoke by phone and in person with various friends, colleagues, and acquaintances to share my astonishment and learn their opinions about what we knew and didn't know about the incidents. I communicated with several colleagues and peers, professors like me from the Faculty of Psychology at the Autonomous University. One of my fellow faculty members, by the way, lost a family member in the attacks, as did some students. Another lived in front of one of the train stations where the bombs exploded. Although I only learned about all these details later.

I made several calls to find out if my friends and colleagues specializing in Clinical Psychology were articulating any immediate plans to accompany the victims' families, whose number was increasing as the media updated the information, minute by minute. Hours later, several of those colleagues would volunteer to work all night and in the following days with the families of the deceased and missing, trying to help them manage the shock and pain caused by the personal losses and the uncertainty generated by the lack of news about relatives who had likely traveled on the trains. They did a magnificent job, as I learned later,



despite the lack of organization due to the absence of protocols to act in such exceptional and difficult circumstances, never before experienced in our country, nor practically in any other European country. I remember that I talked with my friend Javier Urra, a well-known psychologist for his experience who had held relevant positions in the administration, and I offered to help to the best of my abilities. However, we both agreed that it was the psychologists with clinical training and experience who should help on-site the healthcare and emergency personnel and go to the places where the families of the victims and the missing were gathering.

I also remember that the day was getting darker as the hours passed, while doubts about the circumstances and authorship of the attacks were growing along with the accumulation of statements and opinions expressed in the media. I have no qualms about admitting that my first mental reaction was to think of ETA. If I hadn't heard the statements made in that same direction by the Minister of the Interior, I would have believed it anyway. I remember spending quite some time that morning zapping in front of the television, changing channels to follow the news broadcast by different national and international sources. I heard Arnaldo Otegui denying ETA's involvement. Undoubtedly, he was afraid of the repercussions that such a monstrous attack could have for the Basque left, which he led, after having been a member of the terrorist group for years. But ETA and its allies had covered many of their deadly actions with lies, so I assumed that either Otegui was lying or ETA had hidden its involvement from him. When I switched to the BBC, it happened that a journalist from that channel was interviewing Gustavo de Arístegui, a diplomat and Spanish politician who knew jihadist terrorism thoroughly. When asked who he thought had committed the attacks that day, he responded with full force that he had no doubt it was ETA. Over the next few hours, many of the statements made in the political sphere and in the media would feed enormous confusion and be imbued with an intentionality and political bias worthy of a better cause. But at that moment, I believed, as I still do today, that when making those statements, Gustavo was saying exactly what he thought. Even so, it was evident that those attacks represented a change in pattern and raised legitimate questions about their authorship and purpose. Later, I started to consider the jihadist hypothesis quite plausible, especially as I recognized the similarities with the 9/11 attacks and learned about the news of the first arrests made by the police.

Human memory tends to be somewhat disorderly and can mix the times of different memories. Mine about March 11 are also mixed, so when something reminds me of that fateful morning, some painful images that my own mind created based on information received some time later come to my consciousness: representations that I formed in the following months, as a result of the experiences recounted to me by several members of the emergency personnel who were present at the stations where the mangled trains were stranded: hellish scenes that coincide with the war landscapes of the photos disseminated by the media and whose details I prefer not to dwell on.

Thinking backward and asking myself about the changes stimulated by that massacre, several answers come to mind, but I'm not sure of any. I must note the perplexity produced by the initial reactions that the attacks elicited from our political elites, the media, and the population. The afternoon after the attacks, there was a demonstration that I attended without hesitation. It took us almost an hour to leave the station and reach the crowded street where the rally started. The pain and tension were more than palpable. When we finally emerged, there was a persistent rain, as if the sky itself were crying; the comment sounds cheesy, but that's what I thought to myself at that moment. The way the government was informing about the crisis seemed biased to me. Likewise, I was frozen to hear some of the demonstrators that afternoon calling President Aznar a "murderer," succumbing to suggestions spread by some media that the attacks were an act of revenge for Spanish support for the Iraq War, launched the previous year by the United States. Even if it had been true (which was not exactly the case), the blame for any terrorist act lies entirely with its material and intellectual authors, but it seemed that some Spaniards didn't see it that way. When in the following days a reverse conspiracy theory began to take shape and spread, ignoring the growing evidence of jihadist authorship and clinging to the ETA thesis with increasingly outlandish and extravagant arguments, I began to realize to



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what extent delirium and division could be brought about by that immense tragedy, as it indeed ended up happening. Sixteen months later, the city of London suffered its own massive terrorist attack carried out by jihadists, and the British authorities, press, and population gave a lesson in unity and moral clarity that filled me with envy.

I don't know if the tragedy of March 11 changed Spaniards. The dominant explanations, from both sides, painted the attacks as an exceptional incident: either they were a consequence of supporting a stupid war that was far from us, or they were the result of an alleged conspiracy to change a government. When the issue was different: like other Western countries, Spain had been in the sights of global jihadism for years and would continue to be so for a long time, regardless of what our authorities did. Since the turn of the century or even earlier, we had begun to face a threat that was and still is structural, for opposing jihadist fanaticism and barbarism, for being who we are, for being where we are, and for having the past we have. Nothing more. Our security forces, intelligence services, and armed forces learned this quickly, and thanks to their work, we have dodged several attempted attacks. Meanwhile, a good part of the population forgot that the problem was still with us, as if the succession of police operations against jihadism were nothing more than mere anecdotes. Like other colleagues, I warned several times in the press that we were still vulnerable: "Vulnerable to Jihadism" was the title of an article I published in the newspaper El País on March 21, 2017. It didn't take a crystal ball to anticipate that, sooner or later, the wave of attacks across Europe fueled by the self-proclaimed Islamic State would reach Spain. And so it did: a few months later, in August, fifteen people were run over on the Ramblas in Barcelona and lost their lives (one more died in Cambrils). And if many more did not die, it was only because the perpetrators of those improvised attacks failed in preparing the necessary means to perpetrate one or several much deadlier massacres. The reaction to the 2017 attacks was not like that of March 11, but it was not without tensions, and terrorism was again used by some as a weapon. Terrorists always test the societies they attack, and we don't come out very well from that exam, with the victims and their families witnessing a new wave of polarization and absurd but harmful rumors.



### María José Garrido

She is a commander in the Civil Guard, currently stationed at the State Secretary for Security, leading several national investigations. Previously, she was a professor in the leadership department at the Higher Center for National Defense Studies (CESEDEN), a reference and excellence organization for both the Armed Forces and the Civil Guard. Responsible for training military leaders through subjects as important as self-awareness, leadership, and human resources management. She holds a European Doctorate with honors in Psychology (Mitt Sweden University - Autonomous University of Madrid), with a master's degree in Forensic Sciences, Criminal Profiling, and Gender Violence. She also holds the Women's Leadership Development Programme title from the University of Oxford. She is the author of three books, among which her novel "About People and Monsters" stands out. She holds various civilian and military decorations.

I was at the military training academy and I remember finishing breakfast and watching the images on television. I still have in my middle-distance pupil the moment I was petrified upon reading in the news subtitle the commuter line where the attacks had occurred. One of them was Guadalajara-Madrid and the other Alcalá de Henares-Madrid. The time and place automatically made me think, "I could have been on that train." It was the commuter line and the schedule that I took daily to study in Madrid. I didn't have time to think about anything else because the terror among the population, the rushing, the fear, uncertainty, and the myriad of questions we all asked ourselves, blocked me. The entire Spain had stopped and something was changing forever.

ETA? It wasn't their Modus Operandi, nor were they the objectives pursued by ETA. For some strange reason, perhaps for control, I needed to think it had to be ETA. I tried to avoid admitting the possibility that it was a second 9/11, but it wasn't a typical attack by the Basque nationalist terrorist group. It seemed to be a new violence more closely linked to other types of ideologies different from those pursued by the band I wanted to stop once I became a Civil Guard. After a brief analysis of the attacks from a criminological point of view, it is necessary to highlight that we were facing subjects more "anonymous" with a different social background than we were used to. With a strong indiscriminate violence against the social population, a perspective of international violence or terrorism, a supranational recruitment capacity, and indescribable weapons of mass destruction. Amorphous organizations with a linear character. It wasn't what we were unfortunately accustomed to.

Fear was felt and palpable in Spain.

Since 11M, everything changes almost from all points of view. There is a basic general interdependence where national security is the fundamental pillar of a State and the other structures depend on it in cascade. From the criminal and police point of view, it is evident that the intelligence structures of the Security Forces and Corps (SFC), coordination, the organization of investigation groups, change, everything changes. At the legislative level, there were dozens and dozens of changes that modified traditional investigation, including technological innovations, protection of terrorism victims, as well as the Penal Code itself (especially the new figures of indoctrination, training, and travel to foreign territory) to adapt to jihadist modus operandi.



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Today, terrorism is one of the most important topics on the national and international agenda of the 21st century for any state and the citizens are aware of it. We live in a world where actions are taken based on the perception of reality, and the reality we experience today is not wanted to be perceived. After 20 years since March 11th, I believe there is unfortunately a worrying normalization phenomenon. It's the same as with gender violence and partner homicides. When there is news, we lament, get angry, get indignant, but shortly after, it is forgotten and dealt with almost with indifference. Similarly, I don't think there is much awareness of the level of danger because fortunately there are no major attacks, society tends to live with terrorism in a distant way, if there is no news, there is no awareness. Nevertheless, Spain is one of the most prepared countries not only in terms of security and protection of its citizens but also in terms of resilience and resistance due to the years of anguish and deaths. Anticipation, prevention, availability of means, the commendable function of the SFC, intelligence services, and international cooperation make Spanish citizens' confidence positive, and despite the alert levels, the perception of security and protection is high.





### **José María Blanco**

Director of Prosegur Research. Professor at the Pontifical University of Comillas (international terrorism and cybersecurity). Co-director of the Strategic Studies and Intelligence Area of the Center for Forensic Sciences and Security at the Autonomous University of Madrid. Co-director of the Master's Degree in Continuing Education in Intelligence for Security (UAM). Intelligence Analysis Professional with experience in both public and private sectors.

Despite some memories having blurred over time, possibly obscured by the weight of numerous specific details, I believe I recall that it was in the office where I became aware of the attacks. At that time, I was leading the 5th Section of Human Resources at the Civil Guard, responsible for managing both civil service and labor personnel. The initial news did not prompt an immediate reaction from me but rather a sort of paralysis. After a few seconds, the first thing I did was to try to contact relatives to verify their whereabouts, as many of them might have used the commuter lines and other affected routes, much like I had done that morning.

Since my arrival at the Civil Guard in 2000, my interest in security matters began to grow significantly, especially after the 9/11 attacks, which led me to become interested in Al Qaeda and explore the background of jihadism in Spain. A significant event in this regard, pivotal in the attacks, was Operation Dátil, which resulted in the arrest of numerous members of the cell led by Abu Dahdah.

Furthermore, among my responsibilities was the management of translators. With only 6 permanent translators on staff, although more than 150 temporary contracts were managed every year, especially for Operation Strait of Gibraltar, I was well aware of the existing limitations. I recall continuous conversations with the command and teams of the Information Service in which they requested more hires due to the enormous amount of materials to be translated resulting from their operations (More detail about experiences on 9/11 and 3/11: <https://segurint.wordpress.com/2017/12/20/guardia-civil-calle-melancolia/>).

In this context, the hypothesis of a jihadist origin quickly imposed itself in my analysis. There were indicators pointing in this direction: direct threats to Spain, a manifest desire for revenge, and the presence of cells with operational capacity in the country.

The days following the attack were intense for me, filled with feelings of anger, helplessness, and profound sadness, especially for the victims and their families. But also for the political and social fragmentation that ensued, which I considered a secondary victory for the perpetrators.



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In my personal experience, the attacks reinforced the importance I already attributed to rigorous analysis and evaluation of information sources as a fundamental pillar for informed decision-making. This is aided by a touch of creativity and profound critical thinking as a means to reach meaningful conclusions.

Additionally, I learned about the vital importance of maintaining honesty and humility in handling these situations. A principle that I believe should be universally adopted by all institutions is to maintain the motto of "all avenues of investigation are open," as commonly proclaimed in the law enforcement domain.

Crisis management also emerges as an urgent need for adequate prior preparation to avoid improvisation, coordination failures, or communication breakdowns.

Reflecting on and extracting lessons learned from any circumstance is crucial to drive a process of continuous improvement. A pertinent example of this critical attitude can be found in Fernando Reinares' new book, who, after exhaustive research on the attacks, suggests that they could have been prevented. Although retrospective analysis always seems simpler, without detracting from the hard dedication and years of research, this does not diminish the need for critical judgment to prevent the repetition of such events or, failing that, to manage them differently.

The global landscape of the last two decades has been marked by a series of significant events — terrorist attacks, financial crises, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the conflict in Ukraine — which have plunged societies into unprecedented uncertainty. This uncertainty, in turn, has fostered an atmosphere of fear and apprehension, leaving citizens perplexed and somewhat disoriented. In this scenario, trust in the future seems to diminish, underscoring the critical importance of effective public communication on security issues. The need for communication grounded in principles of honesty and humility is more pressing than ever in a context where both qualities seem scarce.

In the fight against terrorism, strategies adopted by governments tend to be reactive, implemented post facto, and of an incremental nature, i.e., they are added onto existing measures. The real challenge lies in developing anticipatory and proactive approaches and strategies that surpass short-term thinking and consider the multiple forms of emerging radicalization with the potential to turn violent. This implies adopting preventive measures that allow us to mitigate future, more dystopian scenarios. Terrorism, being a "wicked problem," does not find singular, simple, or short-term solutions. Political responses can unintentionally exacerbate the problem.

The relevance of evidence-based policies is indisputable, essential to ensure that implemented measures are not only effective but do not inadvertently contribute to radicalization. The effectiveness of numerous measures adopted in various areas (legislative, judicial, law enforcement) is undeniable, and the international recognition of the leadership and professionalism of our Security Forces and Bodies, especially in counterterrorism, is a testimony to the commitment and responsiveness to these threats, as reflected in the annual reports of international entities, including the United States.



### María Dolores Calvente

Prison Institutions Officer. Analyst of Terrorism, Insurgencies, and Radical Movements. Teacher at the International Campus for Security and Defense (CISDE). Currently pursuing a degree in Criminology.

I recall that on March 11, 2004, I was unable to comprehend what was happening until several hours had passed since the terrible attack. Just as the events of September 11th were seared into my mind from the very beginning, what occurred in Madrid left me in a state of shock, perhaps because it happened in Spain and not elsewhere, something my inner self was unable to digest. It is the denial of someone in a state of bewilderment, a defense mechanism in which one cannot bear what is happening, because the only emotion overwhelming them is an unbearable fear, a sensation all too familiar in Spain whenever a terrorist attack has ravaged us.

For someone working in a prison, as was my case, the first thought that crosses your mind (I am convinced that many of my colleagues experienced the same) is that a new despicable attack by the terrorist group ETA had struck us again, but now with much more ferocity, in a terrible manner. And it was not at all far-fetched, considering that the previous year ETA had also attempted an attack in Madrid, at the Chamartín station.

However, shortly thereafter, it was confirmed that our country was becoming the target of a "new Islamist threat" and that the terrible attack was nothing more than a small sample and a warning of what could happen again. The jihadist threat was not perceived as such by many of us twenty years ago, although possibly more due to ignorance than underestimation. This, despite the fact that al-Qaeda had already warned of its potential mobilization, that jihad knew no borders, and that our country was also a target for them, having been, in fact, a logistical base for them years before (this many of us learned later).

I must admit that it took time for me to understand the magnitude of this threat and how it could affect us as a society at all levels, in terms of social coexistence or national security, for example. Professionally, adaptation was also difficult, I would say it still is; adapting internal security structures to a new threat for which we were not adequately prepared or trained in correctional facilities has required a great deal of effort.

I remember searching and searching for training programs on the internet, courses that addressed the issue of "jihadism" with a focus oriented more towards the performance of my work, and finding absolutely nothing. Self-training became the guide for many of us, who sought a kind of list of indicators to help us determine if this individual or that one could at some



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point be this or that; over time, I discovered that this was not about closed lists, considering the nature of a threat so equivocal and ambiguous to us, although obviously not to them and their "worldview". I recall the first readings of Professor Javier Jordán around those dates, when he already described a "psychological effect" that should not be underestimated in what he himself defined as a "project and ideology", when he explained what al-Qaeda was, "much more than an organization".

I believe that the jihadist threat remained unfocused until several years after the terrible massacre. It was not until the late 2000s that the prison prevention and detection program began to take shape; it had to be energized after March 11 and also when processes of violent radicalization made their presence felt in prisons with the increase of individuals entering the facilities due to their links with jihadist terrorism; in fact, there were numerous arrests since the fateful date. Perhaps until that moment, jihadism was not perceived as a "real" threat. Shortly thereafter, also in 2004, Operation Nova and the dismantling of what can be considered the prototype of a jihadist cell originating inside a prison, would trigger all alerts: prisons were being instrumentalized as a means of recruiting followers to the jihadist cause.

If asked if we feel threatened, I would respond yes, naturally, we have always been, and in this sense, nothing has changed; the only difference is that now the threat is much more diffuse, unknown, and difficult to comprehend even for many of us due to its tremendous complexity, which greatly hinders our professional work. We have had to face "another type of terrorism". And it is difficult to digest that for the vast majority of jihadist terrorists, Spanish society (the West in general) and democracy are sins. Spain became the political target of a religiously inspired organization that accused us of being pagans and infidels, massacring us with utter contempt. A reality that affects any professional, regardless of their field.

Certainly, that March 11 represented a turning point at the social level, not only because it was the largest terrorist attack to occur in Spain, but also because it erected a wall of insecurity and mistrust among the people, while the jihadist organization advanced its long-term project. A strategic success for them and a security challenge for us.

We were not aware of this until some time had passed, but seen in retrospect, it is undeniable that March 11 altered the history of Spain. Later, we learned that jihadist networks were already established in our country a decade before, in what was called "the al-Qaeda network in Spain", and that even in the 1980s, Spanish agencies were alerted to jihadist threats in our territory, from individuals to small groups linked to jihadism. Analyzed from a current perspective, knowing this is quite chilling.

If I had to describe my perception today, two decades after that infamous massacre, I would say that, although we have advanced in knowledge, and there is no doubt about that (we know much more than we did before), I honestly believe that there is still progress to be made. A great expert in the field, Dalila Benrahmoune, warns that until we are able to understand (understand through effort) the "worldview" of the so-called jihadist, our knowledge will be limited, unfocused, imperfect, and unreal. We will only be able to approach this phenomenon and understand it in all its magnitude when we understand how they perceive the world and shape their reality, or, in other words, how they have constructed the context in which they move and towards which they direct their lives. Another great expert, Bahae Eddine Boumnina, points out that to do this, we will have to "decipher the mind of the jihadist".

I stand with them. And I believe that after more than four decades of jihadist horror, this is where we should be.



### José Villena

Second Lieutenant of the Civil Guard, assigned to the General Directorate of Coordination and Studies. Ministry of Interior. Graduate in Criminology and Master's in Criminal Analysis and Investigation, and Master's in Nonverbal Behavior. Currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Criminology at the Catholic University of Murcia (UCAM).

As another typical workday unfolded, I made my way to the office. At that time, I served as the Deputy Secretary of the University Institute for Domestic Security Research (IUISI), and since our headquarters were located on Francos Rodríguez Street in Madrid, there were days when I commuted by private vehicle, and that happened to be one of them.

As was my habit, I listened to the radio in the car, and the news that day caught me off guard, as one would expect with such shocking news. My heart raced as I quickly realized that my colleague Marcos, who commuted via public transportation, had to transfer trains at Atocha station.

At that time, my car did not have Bluetooth, and I admit, in violation of traffic safety regulations, I frantically tried to call my colleague. The lines were overwhelmed, and I couldn't reach him. While attempting to locate him, another colleague called me, as there were three of us in the office, inquiring about both me and Marcos, aware that Marcos always commuted to work via suburban trains.

The anguish and fear of not knowing our colleague's well-being were memorable, as I recall now, twenty years later, through these lines. Eventually, I managed to speak with him, and calmness prevailed over fear.

Nevertheless, frustration and despondency consumed me, as I thought that ETA had succeeded in its plans. Initially, I suspected the Basque terrorist organization ETA, as public transportation was a preferred target of ETA, particularly Chamartín station. It is worth noting that, a year prior, on December 24, 2003, ETA had planned an attack on this station using two backpacks containing 25 kg of Titadyne.

Over time, as news from various radio stations and television channels gradually unfolded, a different perspective emerged. A new actor entered the national political stage. In the days following the attack, the situation of public transportation changed. People looked at you with suspicion if you carried a bag, backpack, or package. For a long time, doubt and fear permeated society. I witnessed people getting off or changing subway cars because individuals with hats, backpacks, and certain ethnic or racial characteristics entered. Society feared the possibility of another attack occurring.



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Personally, since my route from home to work passed through Atocha interchange, I began to use my private car more frequently for these journeys.

There were significant changes in policies and approaches. It should be noted that the most significant terrorist attack suffered in Spain was allegedly carried out by international jihadist terrorism.

As I mentioned, I was stationed at IUISI, and at that time, we initiated a series of training actions (seminars, workshops, etc.), all aimed at researching organized crime and terrorism financing.

I also recall that we signed an agreement with the ICO Foundation to establish a Chair addressing two fundamental aspects: an academic research line and the development of a course on organized crime, money laundering, and terrorism financing. This course was well received and continued for several editions, even reaching three editions, until we were reassigned in 2007 to the recently created Office of Internal Security Studies (GESI), under the Secretary of State for Security.

Royal Decree 1571/2007, of November 30, which develops the basic organizational structure of the Ministry of the Interior, includes in its Article 2 the creation of this new Office, whose functions include:

- Develop the Internal Security Statistical System, as well as carry out and promote studies and research aimed at understanding the situation and evolution of different criminal forms and the social perception of security.
- Conduct studies and analyses on aspects related to security policies, as well as on the impact achieved by certain general operational plans.
- Develop and promote the holding of training actions aimed at senior officials of the Security Forces and Corps, aimed at promoting and updating common management values and promoting an effective corporate culture of cooperation and collaboration.
- Act as the Spanish Center of the European Police Academy.
- Develop corresponding relations with other similar Centers or Units of the European Union, its Member States, or third countries.
- Encourage the participation and collaboration of the University, other public and private entities or institutions, and investigative personalities or academic sphere, in the development of activities and functions that correspond to it.
- Any others entrusted to it by the Minister of the Interior or the Secretary of State for Security.

Recently, Royal Decree 207/2024, of February 27, has been published, which develops the basic organizational structure of the Ministry of the Interior, and establishes that these functions are currently carried out through different areas of the General Directorate of Coordination and Studies as a supporting and advisory body to the person holding the position of Secretary of State for Security.



METROPOLIS



### Ana Isabel Díaz Delgado

Graduated in Higher Studies of Oriental Languages from the Oriental Biblical Institute (IBO) in Madrid. Completed courses such as "Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Comparing Theory and Practice" at Leiden University, "Understanding Terrorism and the Terrorism Threat" at the University of Maryland, and a course on "Jihadist Terrorism," as well as obtaining the title of Expert Judicial Graphologist from UNED. She serves as a board member of the Victims of Terrorism Association (AVT), holding the position of International Area Coordinator since 2011 and serving as the Delegate in Asturias. She is a member of the RAN Network, specializing in Victims of Terrorism, and coordinates the TESSCCO area at the OISCOT/UEMC International Observatory of Security, Organized Crime, and Terrorism. Additionally, she is the co-founder and Director of the Minerva Institute, a Think Tank specializing in Intelligence and Geopolitics.

I remember being at my home when one of my siblings alerted me that ETA had perpetrated an attack at the Atocha station in Madrid. The news weighed heavily on our hearts, due to the magnitude and the number of victims, which surprised us immensely. Victims of terrorism undergo a revictimization every time an attack occurs; in my case, the initial reaction was to communicate with other members of the AVT. The ensuing hours were chaotic, filled with communication attempts and calls to establish the perpetrator and quantify the exact number of victims. The chaotic influx of information greatly hindered the assimilation of the attack.

This attack had a significant impact on Spanish society and the country's counterterrorism policies. It sparked extensive debate on citizen security and counterterrorism efforts in Spain and globally. Various measures were implemented to enhance security and prevent future terrorist attacks, including legislative reforms and stronger international cooperation on security matters. In terms of public trust, the March 11 attack instilled a sense of vulnerability and fear among the Spanish population, which lingered in our collective memory. However, it also fostered greater awareness of the importance of citizen cooperation and solidarity in times of crisis. In terms of policies and approaches, the March 11 attack significantly influenced Spanish politics and how the terrorist threat is addressed. Efforts were intensified to bolster intelligence and security capabilities, as well as to promote social integration and the prevention of violent extremism. This led to the creation of numerous victims' associations focusing on jihadist terrorism.

In the initial years, the measures were stringent, resulting in a high level of security in society. However, over the years, these measures have been relaxed, and the perception of another attack of such magnitude has also diminished. In summary, the March 11, 2004 attack left an indelible mark on Spanish society and counterterrorism policies, driving significant changes in how security and the fight against terrorism are addressed. Sadly, it seems that much of that resolve has faded over time; the policies for victim support remain inadequate, leaving them feeling abandoned by institutions, much like victims of other attacks. We should have learned much more from our history, understanding that terrorism cannot be trivialized, and that policies promoting the end of ETA terrorism also benefit the jihadist prison population.

The fight against terrorism entails a battle against forgetting.



### José Martínez Marín

Sub-inspector of the Local Police of Murcia. He holds a degree in Criminology and Computer Science, along with a Master's degree in Computer Security, a Master's degree in Nonverbal Communication and Managerial Skills, and a Master's degree in Criminal Profiling and Emotional Intelligence. Currently, he is responsible for the departments of Standards and Procedures and European Programs, actively participating in the latter in several European projects focused on the protection of places of worship against terrorist attacks, as well as the mitigation of hate crimes and human trafficking. Additionally, he serves as an associate professor in the Criminology Degree Program at the Universidad Internacional de la Rioja (UNIR).

It was a day like any other. In 2004, I worked as a computer scientist in a multinational company on a project based in Murcia. After arriving at my desk at six in the morning, I began with the routine activities of my work. At that hour, the atmosphere in the office was typical: colleagues focused on their tasks, the sound of keystrokes, and the murmur of early morning conversations. We were all oblivious to the fact that, in just a few hours, the reality of our country would change forever. The news of the attacks in Madrid burst into our daily lives with the brutality of a direct blow to the soul, marking a before and after, not only on a national level but also in my personal and professional perception. In an era where the immediacy of digital communication was still a sketch of what we know today as WhatsApp, the anxiety due to lack of information was suffocating, exacerbating the confusion in the face of the impossibility of obtaining real-time information. The physical distance between Murcia and Madrid vanished in the face of shared concern; many of us had roots, friends, and family in the capital who used those train routes.

The desperate attempt to establish contact with our loved ones, facing the saturation of phone lines, marked the beginning of a day of uncertainty. The initial reaction was one of shock and confusion, followed by an urgent need to comprehend the magnitude of what had happened. I recall how we descended to the ground floor, where the cafeteria was located, in a silence laden with concern, where the images of terror on television confronted us with a reality hitherto unimaginable. At that moment, solidarity among us blossomed, a reflection of the strength of a country that, despite pain and adversity, united in compassion and mutual support.

The experience of 11-M, coupled with the impact of the September 11, 2001 attacks, catalyzed a profound reflection on my career and my role in society. The decision to orient my trajectory towards the police field was not impulsive but the result of a process of introspection motivated by the need to actively contribute to the protection and security of our society.

The influence of 11-M on my socio-political perspective was transformative. I became more aware of the complexities of the globalized world we live in, the importance of national security, and individual and collective responsibility in the prevention of terrorism. Before the attack, my focus was on the possibilities that technology offered to improve our lives, with little consideration for its implications on security.



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The tragedy made me aware of the fragility of our society in the face of threats of such magnitude and the need for an integrated response that combines technology, intelligence, and community cooperation. It taught me the value of resilience, the importance of prevention, and the need for a constant commitment to the security of our society. As we continue to face challenges in the fight against terrorism and other threats, these lessons remain at the heart of my approach to security and the protection of citizens.

The transformation of jihadist terrorism and the national and international response to this threat have required constant adaptation of security strategies. The publication of the new National Strategy against Terrorism is a testament to the effort to keep the public informed and active in the fight against terrorism, reinforcing confidence in the security measures implemented and the responsible institutions.

The detailed analysis of jihadist trends and transformations in Spain, as well as the international recognition of our country as a reference in the field, are indicative of an effective and coordinated response. This constant evolution of counter-terrorism strategy underscores the importance of understanding changes and continuities in the global terrorism landscape to anticipate and mitigate the spread of jihadism.

The security measures adopted have strengthened the perception of security among citizens, increasing surveillance and fostering international cooperation. However, the challenge persists in finding an adequate balance between security and individual freedoms, a dilemma that remains central in the discussion about the response to jihadist terrorism.

Looking ahead, our commitment must be unwavering: to protect the foundations of our society, strengthen community resilience, and tirelessly work for a future where peace and security are immovable pillars. The memory of the victims and the lessons learned in these years must be the guiding light that leads us toward that future.

The experience of 11-M, with its burden of loss and its legacy of unity, reminds us of the responsibility we share in building a more just, safe, and tolerant society. Together, with determination and hope, we continue forward, honoring those we lost and working for a world where terror and division have no place.



### César San Juan Guillén

PhD in Psychology. Specialization in Social Psychology from the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium). Professor of Criminal Psychology and Legal Psychology. Department of Social Psychology at the University of the Basque Country. Principal Investigator of the Research Group in Applied Criminology and Environmental Psychology.

"You have a month to leave the Basque Country, otherwise, face the consequences." That was how the message sealed by ETA ended in a simulated letter bomb that I received in my office at the Faculty of Psychology during a time when such correspondence was the price for speaking out against the terrorist organization and the social sectors that supported it. I did so mostly in the classroom, to my students. As a professor of Social Psychology, what else could I talk about in a University, a temple of knowledge, respect, and dialogue, amidst what was happening outside?

An Ertzaintza agent evaluated the location of my office and recommended that I move to a different one, as the one I occupied, very close to the staircase, was easily accessible to a motivated gunman who, after shooting me, could easily flee. For compelling reasons not relevant here, I neither left the Basque Country nor requested another office. This, from a very personal perspective and with the seemingly prescribed deadline given by ETA, was the context in which the 11M attack took place.

Indeed, during that same dark and bloody period, a terrible attack occurred. It was inevitable to think that behind this massacre could be ETA. Just seven years earlier, F. Javier García Gaztelu, alias "Txapote," shot Miguel Ángel Blanco twice in the head. An abominable murder that made us think that the utmost level of infamy and cruelty had been reached.

After Al Qaeda claimed responsibility for the March 11 attacks, and the responsibility of ETA was completely ruled out, the then-president of the PNV's "national executive," Josu Jon Imaz, stated that a "burden had been lifted off him." The new generations witnessing the current debate on "good terrorism vs. bad terrorism" can verify, upon reviewing the archives of those months, that the discussion has some age to it.

My professional activity at that time was heavily oriented towards psychosocial intervention in major crises. For this reason, I was particularly attentive to the emergency system's response to this attack, which, from any analytical perspective, vastly exceeded the capacity for management and intervention. One of the SAMUR officials admitted to me, utterly dejected, that the assistance resources for survivors and families of the deceased were completely overwhelmed. From a psychological standpoint, it was a devastating blow that made us understand the diversity of profiles of "victims" that could emerge and were not initially considered. For example, the emergency service workers themselves who had to pick up pieces of shattered bodies in train



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carriages amidst a dissonant background noise of dozens of mobile phones continuously ringing among the charred clothing of the corpses. Dead bodies still receiving calls from relatives trying to get a response from the daughter, brother, or mother who had boarded that train to hell that morning and had not returned home.

One of the forensic doctors who worked on-site admitted to me that the process of identifying bodies was indeed tough. I was particularly struck by his response when I asked about the nature of a profession in which you always have a corpse on your work table. He confessed that what caused him the greatest unease was stripping a deceased person of their intimate belongings, a medal with a daughter's photo, a necklace with a date, a bracelet with the name of a loved one, "that depersonalization is a terrible moment during the autopsy, but afterward, it's just a body for the forensic examiner."

I will also always remember the case of a woman whose train doors closed in front of her face, but she managed to kick it, blaming it for being late for work. She saved her life by just half a second. Or the students in a classroom at the Complutense University, completely decimated, filled with empty desks of classmates killed in the attack. All people who perhaps weren't even at the crime scene or didn't suffer the loss of direct relatives but were deeply traumatized, leading us to coin the term "survivor syndrome" forever.

With this attack, we could see the fragility of a security that many took for granted. The world became a dangerous place, and something had to be done about it. In terms of my field of work, psychology, emergency assistance resources were significantly improved, and nowadays, in all psychologists' associations, there are specialized crisis intervention groups capable of networking if a similar event were to occur. However, as is logical, the political, legal, and police challenge is to ensure that such a thing never happens again.

I could ascertain the importance of psychological assistance in the first moments after the attack or any type of crisis, as it has been demonstrated that those initial moments of accompanying the victim are crucial for a better prognosis.

Furthermore, I could also see that there are people who, amidst horror, are capable of extraordinary actions. This ability to overcome barbarism, grit one's teeth, and fight, I believe, should be recognized in all the people who were in that hell and who continue to give their best today.





### Patricia Pazos

Phd in International Relations specializing in terrorism and coordinator of the Master's program in Political Communication at the University of Alcalá. Professor/Director of the Master's in Project Management. Europass trainer. Delegate of the United States for CISEG.

At the age of 20, I was studying at the university in Madrid when chaos and nervousness engulfed everything. We were young, more than two hundred individuals cohabiting in a common space, and suddenly found ourselves immersed in a state of confusion and fear. We couldn't comprehend what had happened, but the reality was undeniable: a terrorist attack had just shaken the city. I vividly recall how we protested, united in our indignation and solidarity. But I also remember the weight of the silence that followed our protests, a silence laden with unanswered questions and fear of the unknown.

Many people in our circle began to develop traumas. After all, it could have been us. We used to take those trains, at those same hours. The proximity of danger left an indelible mark on our minds and hearts. It was one of the first times that, almost as adults, we came face to face with the brutal reality of a terrorist attack. We understood that behind those acts of violence are sons, daughters, parents, siblings; ordinary people whose lives are forever altered.

The March 11 attacks in Madrid sparked in me a profound curiosity about the motives driving someone to commit such acts of evil against strangers, against normal people like us. Gradually, that curiosity turned into a passionate interest, and eventually into a career dedicated to the study of terrorism.

The images of that day will never escape my mind. Every time I close my eyes, I can see the faces of those who lost their lives, of those who were injured, of those whose lives changed forever in the blink of an eye. Disbelief. But through the pain and tragedy, I also found a purpose. I decided to dedicate my life to understanding the roots of terrorism, to seeking ways to prevent and combat it. Because if there's one thing I learned from 11-M, it's that we must confront hate with love, violence with compassion, and darkness with light. And the victims, not enough was ever done for the victims.

So here I am, years later, remembering that fateful day that changed my life and perspective forever. And though the pain remains, so does the determination to build a safer world, where peace and justice are more than just words on paper. Since that tragic day, terrorism ceased to be a local problem and became a genuine priority on the international agenda. It became painfully evident that cooperation between countries was essential in the fight against this scourge. We realized that terrorism always returns, transformed and reinforced, constantly challenging our defenses and demanding a unified and coordinated response.



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In that sense, Europe and Spain came together as never before. We recognized that our enemies know no borders, and that only by working together could we hope to overcome them. Joint strategies were established, intelligence ties were strengthened, and stricter security measures were implemented. We learned that solidarity and collaboration are our most powerful weapons in the fight against terrorism, and that only together can we prevail over hate and violence. Thus, the legacy of 11-M is not only pain and tragedy, but also the lesson that together we are stronger - we must be stronger. That in the darkest moments, and I can attest to this working with terrorism victims, humanity can find the strength to overcome any adversity. And now, far from that inexperienced student in Madrid, turned into a mother, my commitment inevitably lies in building a better world for future generations and never forgetting the victims of terrorism.



### Vicente Aguilera

In the cybersecurity sector since 2001, founding partner of Internet Security Auditors, founder and president of the OWASP Spain chapter, and member of the Technical Advisory Council of RedSeguridad magazine. Collaborator in various open-source projects (OWASP Testing Guide, OWASP Top 10, WASC Threat Classification, OSSTMM, ISSAF), he is the author of the "tinfoleak" tool aimed at intelligence analysts for social network analysis. He has discovered and published vulnerabilities in products and services from Oracle, Google, Facebook, and LinkedIn, among others. He is a regular speaker at cybersecurity events and has collaborated as a professor at multiple universities. He currently directs the Master's in Cyberintelligence at the International Cybersecurity Campus, endorsed by the Catholic University of Murcia (UCAM). He is co-author of the book "Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) – Investigating people and identities on the Internet."

We are not aware of how quickly time passes until, one day, we stop and take distance through a milestone that, for some reason, comes to mind. Undoubtedly, that March 11, 2004, is a clear example of a milestone that marked our society as a whole. Twenty years have passed, but those moments are etched in our memory as if they had happened yesterday. And so it should be, as we should never forget how fragile our lives are, and how suffering can be like a sudden gust of wind.

On the fateful morning of 11M, I was at home. It was Thursday, and I was about to head to the office to start my workday when, around 8 in the morning, radio stations and television networks began reporting the news. Initially, everything was very confusing (as is often the case in the early moments of such situations when all the information is not yet available), but the explosions of devices on several commuter trains in Madrid foreshadowed the worst. The perpetrators of the tragedy wanted to produce the highest number of deaths possible, and the choice of locations had been especially calculated. Thus, the Atocha station is a vital hub of our railway network since, in addition to connecting with numerous suburban stations, it is the origin or destination of long-distance trains. Many of us pass through there multiple times each year. In short, places with extremely high numbers of people. As the minutes passed and the magnitude of the tragedy became known, we tried to contact our family and friends who, for professional or personal reasons, could have been in the same place at the same time as the terrible attack. Calls were made, some went unanswered (fortunately, they would be answered later), while the news coverage made us realize that the number, location, and coordination of the attacks were different from what we had experienced before. The number of victims and injured was rising rapidly, and we all felt identified. Pain knows no age, race, gender, or social status. Any of us could have been a direct victim of that 11M, although, in one way or another, we were. Indignation and helplessness.

Certain events, such as those that occurred on 11M, cause us to stop and step off the train of life, on which we travel at high speed, to reflect and reconsider certain aspects. It is necessary to stop, to appreciate what we have, to be aware that tomorrow we may not be able to board the train again, that we may not see our loved ones again, that we may not be able to carry out the project we had proposed, that all our actions and efforts do not prevent us from having an expiration date. A date that, moreover, we do not know and for which we will never be prepared. But that stop must also serve to prioritize what really matters, to value opportunities, to make the most of any moment, to appreciate the details, and, as long as we continue traveling on the train, to try to be better people. However, the path is not without difficulties.



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Unfortunately, our country has suffered the scourge of terrorism firsthand for many years. That long struggle has served to be more and better prepared, although total security remains a utopia. On numerous occasions, we have seen how, with very few technical and human resources, great harm can be caused to society, especially when the terrorist does not intend to save their life after committing the attack. Following 11M, a special security plan was adopted. The public has a greater understanding of the level of anti-terrorism alert and its implications, in addition to noticing a greater presence and control of the State Security Forces and Corps, especially in sensitive locations, which provides a greater sense of security and confidence.

In addition to visible actions, we must highlight the work of information units (facilitating lines of investigation that often remain in the shadows), and not forget that a great deal of cyber surveillance work is carried out on the Internet (let us not forget how technology facilitates the recruitment and indoctrination process), whose proactive measures have allowed for the dismantling of new terrorist acts in our territory, as well as the carrying out of numerous arrests. In this regard, we must highlight the exceptional work carried out by the State Security Forces and Corps.

11M was a heinous and bloody event that took place on the eve of general elections. The worst attacks suffered in our country. It brought about many changes in society, but we must not forget the broken families and the pain caused. 191 dead, 1857 injured.

From here, my sincerest recognition and memory to all victims of terrorism.



### Oscar Ruiz

He has been a career military officer in the Marine Corps for over 30 years, 10 of which were spent at NATO Headquarters and an equal number on military missions in Africa, Asia, and America. A military intelligence analyst and expert in migrations, he is currently responsible for the Defense and Defense Industry section at Digital Sh

On March 11, 2004, he was stationed at NATO Headquarters in Sarajevo. Communication with foreign countries from Spain was not as fluid 20 years ago, and we began to hear rumors of a train bombing in Madrid stations. There were few Spaniards there, and the news was confusing as the casualty figures rose, and all indications pointed to ETA, but the modus operandi was not that of the terrorist group... It was very difficult to digest that blow from so many kilometers away from Madrid, knowing that there would be fallen comrades in the attacks.

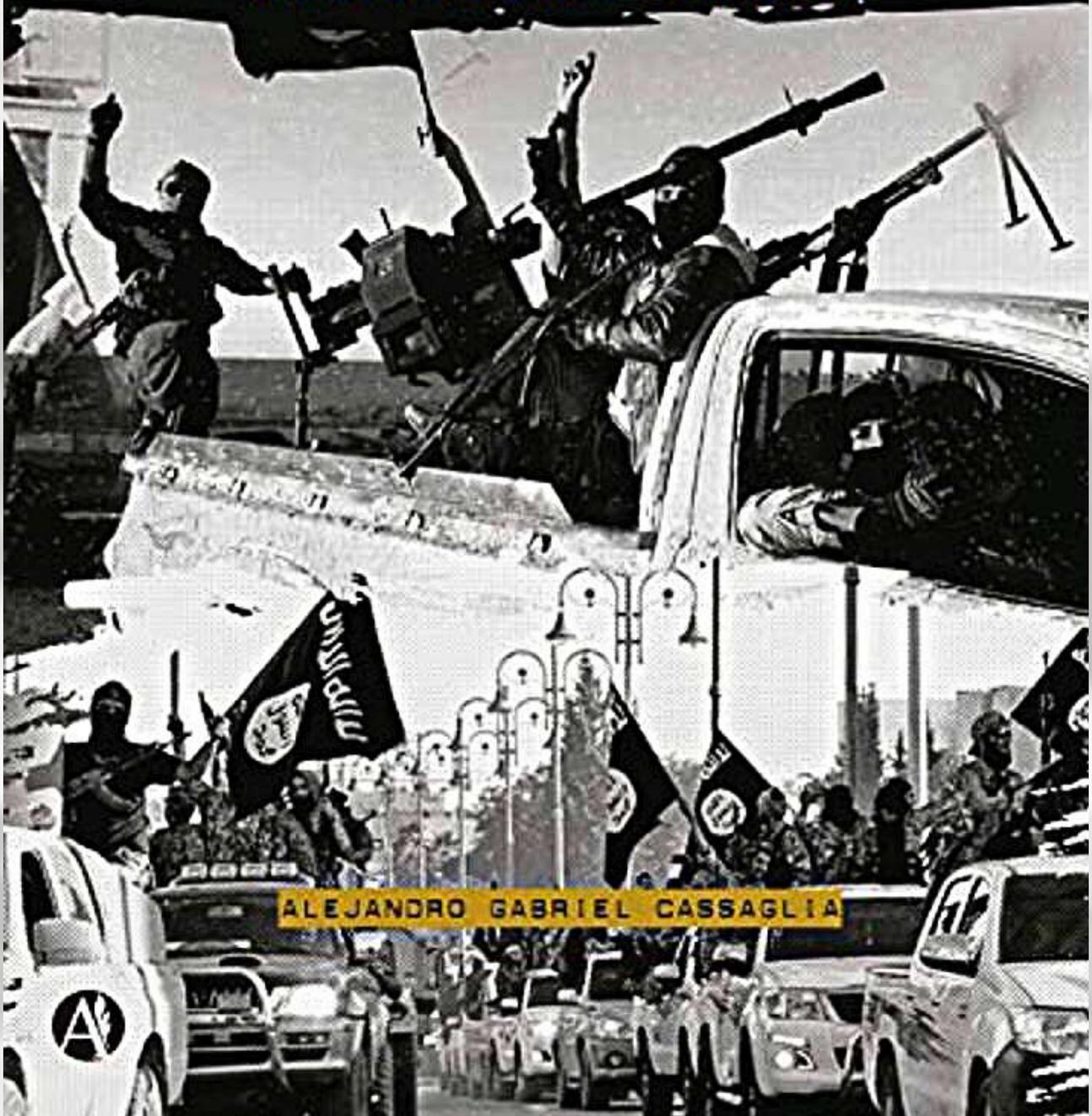
Obviously, March 11, 2004, changed the definition of terrorism in Spain, which for us was a specific issue of the Basque separatists and usually targeted political objectives and state security forces to claim independence. But suddenly, on that March 11, every single one of us became a potential victim of terrorism, and the perception of security changed forever. Since then, we have allowed all necessary liberties to be shortened, just to feel a little safer.

Spain, due to its long and sad experience with ETA, knew from the outset how to protect its citizens, and I believe that, in general, the Spanish citizen feels safe and quite confident to lead their normal lives since that fateful March 11th. The Defense culture assimilated since that day has made us realize that absolute security does not exist and that we too can participate in the general security of society. The shadow of jihadist terrorist attacks will always be there, threatening, but we have learned to live with it.

TERRORISMO

# TERRORISMO YIHADISTA

UNA AMENAZA EXTERNA



ALEJANDRO GABRIEL CASSAGLIA

**CÓMPRALO EN AMAZON**

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### Selva Orejón

She is a judicial expert specialized in Digital Identity and Reputation. She was awarded the 2023 Woman in Business Prize in the senior business category. She also received the DONATIC 2022 Award for Businesswoman of the Year from the Generalitat de Catalunya. Holding a Bachelor's degree in Communication Sciences from the Universitat Ramon Llull, and Diplomas in Business Organization and Environment from the University of Cambridge, as well as in Intelligence in the Service of the State and the Enterprise, she serves as a professor at the University of Barcelona UB in the Cybersecurity Master's program, teaching Cyber Intelligence - OSINT, and at the Catalonia Police School. Her company, onBRANDING, celebrates 17 years specializing in crisis management of online reputation for companies, public institutions, celebrities, as well as anonymous individuals with resources. She has the privilege of teaching these specialties to the Israeli Police and at the General Council of the Judiciary.

It was early morning, and I found myself in the office, seated at the desk, facing the company's market analysis manager, Bocatta, where I was employed. I recall having the radio on in the background, tuned to a morning news program discussing the events unfolding in Madrid. The first thought that crossed my mind was of my cousins in Madrid, roughly the same age as myself, likely attending university. Concern began to gnaw at me, prompting me to call my grandmother, who hailed from Madrid, to inquire if any of her sisters had reached out. As of yet, no news had arrived, but visibly concerned, I told her, "Well, grandma, there's a webpage online where I'm keeping track of the surnames of the deceased... if I see anything, I'll let you know." Harsh as it may sound, it was the reality. In my household, we have always discussed war, "work" camps, and the post-war period with utmost clarity, so despite the fear, it was necessary to address it.

Hours passed, and we all remained glued to news websites. In the afternoon, it was time to go to university, Blanquerna, the School of Communication. It was a Thursday, seminar day, so it became the topic of discussion for practically all the hours we had.

I remember riding my motorcycle, the images vivid in my mind, but one, in particular, stood out: the incessant ringing of mobile phones. It was an image that replayed in my mind repeatedly. Thankfully, by some stroke of fate, various circumstances prevented our relatives from taking trains. It's those unexplainable twists of fate that, when my grandmother's sisters called her, they couldn't believe how it had happened: one didn't have class in the morning, the other arrived late and decided to attend the next class.

I remember that day, and the following ones, perhaps two or three weeks, during which I couldn't stop informing myself—through university lectures, various news programs on television and radio, and newspapers... I recall a small group of people at the university, clearly a minority within the larger group, clinging to the ETA thesis, sparking rather intense discussions.

We closely followed media coverage, I recall watching "Informe Semanal" that Saturday, and all the special programs broadcasted on television channels. I don't recall the internet being one of my primary sources of information, but I do remem-



-ber having Google alerts set up. In fact, to this day, I still maintain two alerts: "Madrid attack" and "Barcelona attack," and over these 20 years, I haven't deactivated them. Unfortunately, the Barcelona alert triggered a few years ago during the disastrous 17A.

From a political standpoint, I've never been active; I harbor a general sense of disillusionment towards the field, coupled with a certain disinterest. I inform myself about politics due to the topics we handle in the office, but to be completely honest, political figures themselves evoke distrust from a psychological perspective. Thus, in that regard, I've never "expected" anything from them. However, I must acknowledge that they crossed boundaries I hadn't experienced firsthand. Nonetheless, having spent almost three years at the School of Communication, delving into contemporary thought, ethics, and engaging in deep seminars, we ultimately analyzed events from various perspectives, which only reinforced my sense of skepticism.

This issue hits me directly and fills me with anger—anger at our country's inability, even today, to match up in terms of technical, economic, and consequently, human resources. Let me explain: we have individuals with exceptional abilities, talent, a strong predisposition, and above all, a vocation. Fortunately, Spain, particularly Madrid, rose to the occasion in terms of emergency response; the team did an exceptional job.

Spain had extensive experience in intelligence analysis; we had human intelligence units and had done considerable work related to terrorism in the past. The attack lent greater credibility to prior intelligence reports, which highlighted the growing threat Europe faces today. I recall reading Samuel Huntington's thesis on the clash of civilizations and Zygmunt Bauman's work a few months prior, finding it almost science fiction... looking back now, it all makes sense.

Socially, I don't believe we've truly addressed the issue; at least, genuine integration hasn't been achieved. Here, I'm inclined to echo Nietzsche's sentiments—we've killed God, and society doesn't know how to live with an empty throne, so we're filling it with various forms of "faith," but it's not doing us much good.

Returning to the security question, I am a staunch advocate of law enforcement and security forces. I have a close relationship with various units and task groups, and at times, I feel quite frustrated seeing members of these units—who possess the enthusiasm, talent, and dedication, seemingly born for the task—running into obstacles. Some become frustrated and leave their positions; many from my own circle have done so. Yet, others persist, finding ways to navigate through challenges, with or without adequate resources, always striving for security.

I believe a robust security culture would benefit us greatly; however, we also need a "reset" of social values, where mediocrity isn't rewarded, where we don't pretend there isn't an elephant in the room, and where the work, effort, and dedication are genuinely valued. In key political positions, we need technicians rather than mere managers, especially in security and intelligence—otherwise, we're missing out.

Of course, we continue to face a real threat situation in Spain and beyond. We know that the interests of many terrorist groups are founded on "extreme religious ideals," and without context, we are unable to grasp that this issue transcends regions or geographical problems; it's a matter of religious wars, impervious to differing opinions, and we know where that leads.

We understand the strong relationship between organized crime and terrorism and how they feed off each other. On a social level, once again, the general public is largely unaware of this, highlighting the lack of a security culture and basic under-



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-standing of geopolitics. But this is a whole other discussion because as I write or you read this article, many people are glued to TikTok, Instagram, watching people dance, their brains "satiated" by watching others do things and consuming misinformation videos that only confirm their biases... and the wheel keeps turning.

It will take significant resources to address this; it won't fix itself. We must remain vigilant, proactive, and open-minded to understand that everything is changing, but some changes aren't progress, thus requiring our utmost attention to ensure we meet the challenges, humanely, socially, technically, politically, and economically.

The stark difference between "the good" and "the bad" still boils down to economic resources, hence technical and human resources as well. However, I want to end on a positive note, very much in line with my beliefs. Yes, I'm a faithful humanist and a follower of Carl Rogers, and I know that there are more good people than bad ones, as Mounier once said.

Humans have an inherent tendency towards growth; thus, there are people right now quitting Facebook, leaving social media behind, putting down their phones, and returning to what is beneficial for their bodies and minds.

I conclude with a note of hope, grounded in belief in the human capacity for resilience. Despite the challenges, I maintain faith in our ability to evolve and adapt, turning negative experiences into lessons for growth and improvement. History teaches us that even in the darkest moments, resilience and solidarity can illuminate the path to a better future.

We have a long way to go; indeed, we are currently not up to the task, but that doesn't mean we can't be. Let the bad things lead us to something good.



### **Fernando Montoya**

Deputy Director General of International Relations at the General Directorate of Defense Policy. High-level relations with national and foreign agencies and ministries in the Ibero-American, Maghreb, Middle East, Europe, NATO, and EU regions. Division of Intelligence of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Defense Staff. Chief Intelligence Analyst, (CIFAS) continuing with relations in the same areas where he had worked as an expert in International Relations. Chief of Staff and Chief of Staff of the Spanish General Representative in Bosnia. In the environment of a Multinational Headquarters. Spanish Liaison Officer in Djibouti (Horn of Africa). Financial Advisor to the Commander of the Operations Command of the Defense Staff. Financial advisor to the Chief of the Defense Staff (with the rank of Secretary of State) and Head of the Economic Administration Directorate of the Defense Staff: Contracting body with delegated powers.

On that day, it has remained imprinted in my retina and seared into my being. It was seven-thirty in the morning when, as the outgoing duty officer, I attended to deliver the customary service updates; I did not linger much because truth be told, the previous night had been devoid of significant events within any of the spheres of my responsibility.

Having completed the protocol, I made my way to my usual office to, albeit somewhat drowsy, commence my daily tasks. Nothing hinted that minutes later, precisely at 07:36, all alarms would sound. Televisions, radios, and phones sprang into action at lightning speed to report an event that shook Spain, its people, and Europe; our blood ran cold.

Next, it was time to take attendance to ensure that all my staff had reported to work, as usual, on time. Initially, two were missing, which later narrowed down to one after half an hour. We initiated a search through all our contact networks, which proved futile until we located him after three hours; he was, they say, disoriented, having lost much of his hearing, as initial assessment suggested, but he was alive, and that seemed sufficient amidst such collateral misfortune. However, he never managed to return to work; his life never returned to normal, and neither did ours, his colleagues'. Thus far, this is how I experienced the beginning of that day, as sad as it was painful.

When such grave events occur, the first thing citizens do is look upwards, towards our leaders, towards our commanders, towards our politicians and leaders, seeking, much like a child seeks its mother, initial refuge to subsequently seek a solution and an impetus to help us continue moving forward with the same strength we had before the abominable incident. Unfortunately, the politicians, far from thinking about the citizenry, decided to engage in mutual accusations that interested no one; it was election time, but not for us, society demanded something else.

From then on, many things changed, including the perception of the threat; the 9/11, so distant in the past, we thought had stabilized, but it was not so; it was a false perception. Concepts such as SECURITY and FREEDOM came into open opposition. Under the guise of the former, and always arguing gratuitously, it is for the good of the citizens, individual liberties were curtailed, which not only have not been restored but have increased. Many and varied measures were taken to enhance our sense of security, although, in a part of us, trust in those who should guarantee it had just been shattered.



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It was something like a shift in social cycle; society perceived, with imminent force, a new threat when it hadn't yet rid itself of the usual one; another security gap would open up before us, forcing us to modify personal behaviors and look outward. A new way of life had emerged, unexpectedly, for us to get used to.



### Juan Enrique Soto Castro

PhD in Psychology from Camilo José Cela University, Madrid. Master's in Cognitive Sciences from the University of Malaga, Master's in Criminal Profiling, and Master's in Nonverbal Behavior and Lie Detection from UDIMA and Behavior & Law University Foundation. Expert in Neuroscience and Diploma in Police Sciences from the University of Salamanca, Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Complutense University. Lecturer at UNIR. Three decades of experience in applying Psychology and Criminology in criminal investigation. Creator of the Behavioral Analysis Section in the Spanish National Police and the VERA Method of criminal profiling.

On March 11, 2004, I arrived early at my workplace. At that time, I was a Professor at the National Police Training and Improvement Division, teaching Psychology classes at the Promotion Center. During those days, the promotion course for Police Officers was underway.

I recall having classes all morning. This course had a large number of students, divided into sections, each with its own classroom, situated along a long hallway adorned with art deco tiles from the twenties of the last century. At the head of the hallway was the Student Office, where a radio was usually playing in the morning.

From early on, the news demanded our attention. Just before classes were about to start, we were attentive, but it is important to highlight that the initial information was scarce and confusing. Nevertheless, from the very beginning, the sense of gravity colored everything.

We couldn't conduct classes. We only had the mental capacity to listen to the radio. As the minutes passed, there began talks of casualty figures, which progressively increased until reaching a point where the psychological impact of the magnitude of the attack was horrifying.

I contemplated the idea of taking the Section I was supposed to teach and heading with them, about thirty police officers, to the affected areas. However, we couldn't arrange suitable transportation for everyone, and we couldn't go by car to avoid causing further traffic congestion. Since we soon learned through our channels that many officers were already on site, we stayed at the Center.

Nevertheless, there was no way to conduct classes. Not that day, nor the following ones. We were in shock. We could only discuss what had happened, its consequences, its authorship, and the social impact such an event would have. The comparison with the 9/11 attacks in the United States was inevitable and painful.

Emotionally, I remember a very clear circumstance. I see myself in the hallway, in front of the Student Office. I hear a figure



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of casualties, and seeing how this figure progressed by the minute, I knew it was going to be much higher than the worst predictions indicated. I felt devastated by so much pain. The information was only auditory. I hadn't yet seen the images. Imagination can be much more powerful than the most explicit image.

Indeed, Spanish society, European, Western in sum, changed with the 9/11 attacks, primarily the attack on the World Trade Center in New York. The Madrid bombings reaffirmed the threat looming over our understanding of the world. Globalization, the information society, ensure that the effects of an event are planetary. The potency of the effect does not diminish with distance, but rather increases.

Governments have taken note. They have understood that the response to the terrorist threat must be collective. It involves the honest and complete exchange of relevant information. This has been largely achieved. As a result, terrorist organizations have found it difficult to carry out other large-scale attacks.

As long as no new "massive" attacks occur, society feels more secure. Subjective security works this way. Another event of such magnitude would suffice to change this immediately, but current preventive measures are quite effective, assuming that total security is impossible.

Yes, the 11M attacks changed our society. It became more fearful, insecure, polarized, and also vulnerable to manipulation by radical messages. Only verified and truthful information can combat this social evil.

In my memory remain the victims and their pain.





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### **Eduardo G.R.M.**

Sergeant of the Mossos d'Esquadra with assignment in units of Citizen Security and ARRO. RV Sergeant of the Air Force with assignment in the EADA. Expert in the use of force by the UHU. Private Security Director by the URV. Completed and certified by BOPE in Rio de Janeiro and by the Special Forces Halcón in Buenos Aires.

On March 11, 2004, the undersigned was on duty, alongside the rest of their unit colleagues, carrying out the tasks inherent to it, such as road controls, crime prevention, and others. The initial reports of the attacks in Madrid deeply shook us all. The feeling that someone from outside our borders had struck at the heart of our nation, in the capital of Spain, was both harsh and surreal. Perhaps that's why the mixed reports about a possible attack by the ETA terrorist group seemed to resonate more with our reality than a jihadist attack by foreign citizens. All members of the unit had in mind the September 11 attacks in New York, and we discussed it, but it seemed absurd to think that someone would plan a similar attack in Spain, a welcoming country with limited military power and no geopolitical interests in the world.

We acted instantly, preparing the necessary materials to respond to such an attack, which typically involves alerting all security forces for the implementation of "Jaula" (Cage) closures in major cities, "DEC" (Static Control Device) anti-terrorist measures, as well as various operational activities related to the search for individuals involved in terrorist acts. With this in mind, we began to equip ourselves with bulletproof vests and various long firearms such as FABARM police shotguns and 9mm HK UMP submachine guns.

Meanwhile, a recurring thought was running through my head: "Where is my father?" My father was in Madrid those days, conducting classes on efficient driving for various transportation companies, located in industrial areas near Madrid, which he typically reached by commuter trains from his hotel. Fortunately, a call from his mobile phone immediately reassured me, "Son, have you seen what happened in Madrid? We're all okay here."

That fateful day was a turning point, both personally and professionally. As a professional, I was already ahead of many colleagues due to my continuous training and education, but that moment prompted me to take another step. I realized I not only had to educate myself further but also do so with the best, and above all, provide that training for the rest of my fellow officers. This led me, in the following years, to train with various intervention units, even with Special Forces in South America, and to pass on that knowledge to more police officers and military personnel, ultimately co-founding a police association for this purpose, ASAD (Security and Support Association for Defense).



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It is worth noting that that day changed the perspective of many other uniformed personnel. Many police officers chose to train, not only for everyday policing but also for these occasions that may happen only once in a lifetime and to which one may occasionally have to face. For many of these officers, there is a clear paradigm regarding the possibility of similar events occurring one day, and they understand that "it is better to be a warrior in a garden than a gardener in a war."

Unfortunately, a significant number of police officers have preferred to continue living without seeking substantial improvement in their training, and many others who had committed to it abandoned it as time passed.

It seems that as a society, we never learn, and this is also reflected in the police force because police officers reflect the virtues and flaws of society. The 11M in Madrid passed, and it was all political promises and citizen support for members of the security forces, but unfortunately, all of that was forgotten over the years. Then came the 17A in Barcelona, another terrorist attack in one of our cities, and again, there were promises and superficial support that faded away week by week. Even today, February 11, 2024, as I write these lines, I know very well that few remember the 11M, a date that should be commemorated in all police and military centers, studied in all schools and universities, recognized by any Spanish compatriot as an act of war within our homes, in our land. I know that only the victims of those days, their families, healthcare services, and various emergency services affected by those events truly understand it. Another group of people fully aware of it woke up that day because the 11M was a sad awakening for the sheepdogs.

And the succinct question is: What is a sheepdog? Lieutenant Colonel David Grossman, in various writings, described a societal scheme in which he divided people into different types, allegorically referring to the animal world: on one side, there are the sheep, peaceful individuals who lack the capacity for violence due to various reasons (the majority of the population); on the other side, there are the wolves, individuals with the capacity for violence who willingly use it for personal gain against the sheep (a minority of criminals and delinquents); and finally, there are the sheepdogs, individuals with the capacity for violence who use it to defend the sheep from the wolves (an indeterminate number of police officers and military personnel). Since the 11M, there has been an awakening of these sheepdogs, often members of the security forces and armed forces, but sometimes not. These are individuals who prepare themselves at various levels, including technical, tactical, medical, psychological, physical, and sports training, in case the wolf strikes again, as it did on 11M and 17A, and they want to be prepared for it. Among them, we have everyone from medical personnel trained in terrorist attack techniques to citizens learning how to use tourniquets for massive hemorrhages, civilian personnel trained in personal defense techniques, police officers trained in active shooter tactics, etc. In short, a mix of people aiming to be as well-prepared as possible for an attack of the mentioned characteristics.

As I have just described to the readers, the sheepdogs have awakened, and the question now is: has Spanish society awakened? I regret to say that we have not. Spanish society encounters a problem, overcomes it, and then forgets about it. The 11M and 17A are prime examples, already forgotten by many Spaniards.

The government and public administration bear some responsibility for this due to various reasons: first, the forgetting of the victims, often hidden and forgotten by society; second, the lack of educational dissemination of the events of those days to learn from them; third, maintaining a permanent state of terrorist alert that wearies both citizens and police officers, normalizing a situation that is abnormal; fourth, the repeated and manifest concealment of the terrorist reality in Spain, such as the number of radical groups and the significant number of police operations that have dismantled "other 11Ms"; and fifth, the lack of logistical and human support for the security forces and armed forces in their fight against this common enemy. Not to mention many other factors of lesser weight but which add up to ensure that this society does not recognize this real problem



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because, let's be clear, most Spaniards do not like seeing the police and especially the army on their streets. They only require them when they have a problem, and then they want them instantly and with the greatest number of resources available. As a friend once said, "It's typical Spanish." We don't want to see the police near our car lest they fine us, but when they don't fine the neighbor's car, we reproach them. We don't want police officers around, but when an incident occurs, we want one on every corner. And, as mentioned earlier, sheep don't like the sheepdog because, although it benefits and protects them, it reminds them of the wolf.

Will another 11M come? Possibly yes. Spain's geopolitical position has made it a logistical center and, at the same time, a target for terrorists. That day will come, and the emergency services will not have the necessary resources to face the situation. We will lack IFAKs (medical kits), AEDs (defibrillators), G36 rifles (police rifles), shields, ballistic helmets, as well as personnel and special intervention units. But above all, we will lack an effective police model and the legal and judicial support to confront that day. Unfortunately, social support is not even considered anymore, at least not until we are needed again, and we sacrifice our lives for it.

Fortunately for our society, many police officers and sheepdogs will have invested part of their time, their family's time, their money, and their lives in preparing for this day, and they will step forward to defend their citizens. And many citizens, with the spirit of the sheepdog, will support police officers, healthcare workers, and armed forces selflessly to face this threat. Regarding these sheepdogs, I can only add, paraphrasing W. Churchill, "Never in the history of humanity have so many owed so much to so few."



### Francisco Javier Moreno Oliver

PhD in Psychology (Cum Laude) and Master in Child and Adolescent Psychopathology from the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Journalist, social educator, and pedagogue; specialist in therapeutic pedagogy and social pedagogy. He studied Criminology at the University of Barcelona and specialized at the National Distance Education University (UNED). His professional career began in the field of penitentiary treatment at the Women's Prison of Barcelona. He was the Educational Director of the Quatre Camins Penitentiary Center and Director of the Brians Prison in Barcelona. Later, he was Director of the Josep Pedragosa Youth Justice Center. A civil servant of the Ministry of Education and Science, now retired. He is the author of various books, articles, research, and conferences in the fields of learning difficulties, social marginalization, psychopathology, and criminology. A scientific disseminator in various media outlets.

Thursday, an ordinary day in March 2004. At eight in the morning, I was on my way to work at the University. As usual, I was listening to the car radio, and a news bulletin announced the headline: "Explosions in several commuter trains in Madrid." I was emotionally stunned. Thoughts of my friends from Madrid and Barcelona who were in the capital on trips came to mind.

The station continued to report on the explosions in four commuter trains in Madrid, and that there were casualties. I recall that the initial information broadcasted by the radio was vague and repetitive. The perpetrators were unknown; initially, I suspected ETA, but something didn't quite fit, although less than a year had passed since the bomb attacks in Alicante and Benidorm carried out by the terrorist group in the summer of 2003. I also considered the possibility of a jihadist act; however, I doubted their infrastructure for an action of such magnitude.

The radio provided new accounts; interviews at the scene began to be heard: victims, healthcare workers, police. All of this was shaping a conceptual map of the case. When I arrived at the Faculty, my colleagues were outside the offices, discussing the news with mobile phones in hand, exchanging updates and assessments; I joined them. It was time to start class; in the classroom, among the students, there was a mix of various reactions: some were asking about what had happened, others had information, affected, still in shock, and others remained silent with a lost look.

It was clear that it was not feasible to deliver the content scheduled for that session. I chose to open a debate on the matter and channel emotions. There was a bit of everything, including those who didn't speak at all. During the debate, mobile phones became the main sources of information. At the end of my time, I left the group in the classroom still actively discussing, waiting for the next teacher. As I walked through the corridors to the Department, the conversation was monothematic, the attack. I stopped with some colleagues I crossed paths with; the comments were clones: how shocking! Do we know who did it? Phew...

I was in my office when I heard the first official version around mid-morning. It was ETA. But the modus operandi described by the media didn't quite align with how the criminal organization usually operated, and theoretically, there was a ceasefire in place in the terrorist activities of the group. But everything was possible. There were three days left until the



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general elections, and voices were already beginning to sing the "Cui prodest" of what had happened. Indeed, in contrast to the predictions of the polls prior to the attack, the PSOE, led by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, won the General Elections with a lead of 4.9% over the PP.

Suddenly, on March 11th, there was a radical shift in the information; the authorship was attributed to Al Qaeda. The death toll was rising, reaching 192, and the injured of various degrees were already close to two thousand.

Weeks later, on April 3rd, I read in the newspaper that an anti-terrorist operation located the perpetrators of the massacre in a safe house in the Madrid town of Leganés. The four terrorists in the building detonated explosives, killing one GEO officer and injuring twelve of his colleagues in the explosion, increasing the death toll of March 11th to 193. I remember this event was not without controversy; there was speculation whether it was an explosion or an implosion, whether the terrorists who died knew too much, we'll never know.

Police investigations led to the arrest of more secondary figures involved in the attack, who were subsequently tried. Other participants are still currently at large.

I had a journalism professor, a professor, who once told us during our studies that the term "conspiracy" was probably coined to disguise a spread secret. A statement that still makes me think today. I wouldn't rule it out in some cases.

Despite the investigations conducted and the trials held in relation to March 11th, there are still unanswered questions and unresolved conspiracy theories. The intellectual authorship has been questioned, with speculations about potential shadowy culprits instead of the radical jihadists indicated by the official narrative. There are doubts about possible politicized failures or concealments of evidentiary proof or whether crucial data were overlooked.

Some critics argue that the official investigation was incomplete and omitted important aspects, besides hastily destroying relevant evidence. These uncertainties continue to be debated among researchers, journalists, and security experts, keeping these events a sensitive issue both in Spain and internationally. The mysteries of March 11th are a darkness still haunting Spanish society.

Despite the years that have passed, questions about the authorship, motivation, and investigation of the attack remain unanswered, or perhaps some have been clarified by literature published on the subject and dismissed as conspiracy theories. Who knows?

Ultimately, March 11th has become for some a dark memory, fading over time and only spoken of in the media with increasingly concise news on anniversaries. The dead from the attack remain resilient in the pain of their loved ones and friends, and the injured struggle to survive with their scars. On the other hand, the true intellectual authors probably think that the end justified the means, dehumanizing what happened.

In my opinion, it is essential to continue seeking truth and justice for the victims. In light of the above, I agree with Isaac Asimov's assertion: "Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent."



### Juan Manuel Hueso Alonso

Criminologist - Security Director. Master's in Emergencies, Emergencies, and Disasters. Master's in Communication. Expert in Security in Critical Infrastructures. Private Security Manager at CISEG. President of SECCIF. Founding partner of CONESCRIM and coordinator of working groups. Security Director at a nuclear sector facility. Professor at UNIR.

Throughout our lives, there are moments that will be etched in our memory, either because they are associated with pleasant experiences or quite the opposite. Every day, we receive a vast amount of information, yet not all of it is retained in our brains. To discern what is important and what is not, these events need to carry a more pronounced significance to merit preservation. Without delving into too many details, as I am not an expert in the field, and I apologize to my psychologist colleagues if I misspeak, but when information is marked by alert elements and factors, it becomes distinct and more easily fixed in memory, thus giving rise to emotional memory (Justel, Psyrdellis, & Ruetti, 2013).

We can assert that there exists a relationship between memory and emotion. That is to say, moments that evoke emotions and all that we perceive through emotions become ingrained in our internal "hard drive" of memory. In each of our memories, there will be moments we will never forget: the birth of a child, the death of a loved one, our first kiss of love, or where we were on days like September 11, 2001, during the attack on the Twin Towers in New York, or the March 11 attacks in Madrid.

These are moments that left a profound impact on us, and I am certain that those who experienced them, if asked where they were or how they felt during those events, could vividly recount their experiences.

Regarding the March 11, 2004 attacks in Madrid, perpetrated at different stations, I remember that day perfectly. At that time, my work focused on personal protection. I was in the car on my way to start my workday when the radio began reporting breaking news about explosions in Madrid, specifically at the Atocha, El Pozo, and Santa Eugenia stations. At that moment, chills ran down my spine as I have a lot of family in Madrid, some of whom live in the Santa Eugenia area and others relatively close to the El Pozo station. My first thought was of my relatives, whether they were safe, and then I deduced that such explosions bore all the hallmarks of a terrorist act. Multiple explosions occurring simultaneously at different stations kilometers apart suggested it was no accident. During those years, we were facing domestic terrorism perpetrated by the ETA terrorist group. Thinking back to the arrest made a few years earlier of one of its members who intended to attack the Torre Picasso in Madrid or the thwarted attack on Christmas Eve 2003 when the National Police prevented ETA from detonating two explosive-filled backpacks at the Chamartín station during peak hours... I thought, this time they succeeded.



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As the investigation progressed, everything took a turn. It wasn't "our domestic terrorism" that had carried out these attacks, but rather a jihadist terrorism, uncommon in Spain. At that moment, perceptions of terrorism in our country began to change. Those of us protecting lives from ETA terrorism and antisocial acts saw how the modus operandi changed entirely with this new type of terrorists. Measures effective against terrorism focused on point-blank shootings and car bombs were no longer as valid against terrorists willing to carry out suicide attacks. Spain, with its unfortunate history, had experience in terrorism, but these attacks necessitated a review of many protocols, operational procedures, and investigative methods. For the country's security officials, even those in the Western world, new challenges and ways of working were being contemplated. Politically, these attacks caused a shift in public opinion, as the government initially attributed them to ETA (I won't delve further into this aspect), and the terrorists' motivations were linked to Spain's involvement in the Iraq War. Consequently, the then government led by President Aznar lost credibility and was "punished" by voters in the elections held shortly afterward. Thus, beyond the victims, there were socio-political consequences that shaped the country's trajectory.

Following those attacks and this "new" terrorism, as a country, we realized we were more vulnerable than we had previously thought. We had to adapt to this new terrorism. For quite some time afterward, it was common to see military personnel collaborating in safeguarding the high-speed train tracks or other critical infrastructure. The terrorist threat level increased, and over the years, due to further attacks like those in Barcelona in 2017, the terrorist threat level escalated to 4 out of 5. In my humble opinion, maintaining this level of terrorist alert for such a long time leads to a loss of awareness. It's challenging to sustain the "tension" for those responsible for our security. Perhaps it would be necessary to review these threat levels, but I understand that nobody wants to "tempt fate," fearing that reducing the alert level could result in a tragedy, although it might not be related. Yet, there's always a tendency to seek blame.

In general, people tend to forget easily, and over time, we become less conscious of these threats until a new event arises. In a globalized world with various armed conflicts worldwide, we mustn't let our guard down. Those responsible for security must remain vigilant, as they do, attentive to everything around us and conducting analyses that could aid in prevention, as evidenced by daily interventions carried out by law enforcement agencies, detaining radicalized individuals, those attempting to radicalize others, or those intending to carry out attacks within our borders.

I don't want to miss the opportunity to express my gratitude to each and every member of the law enforcement agencies, intelligence services, private security, and all those who work tirelessly 24/7 to ensure the safety of citizens. Thank you.

Nor do I want to overlook those who participated, in one way or another, in assisting the victims of the March 11 attacks, especially the Security Guards who were at the Atocha station. Thanks to their work, they attended to the victims firsthand, secured the station, and facilitated access for emergency services when they arrived. These Security Guards were already there when the explosions occurred, and it took many years to recognize their great contribution. Let these brief lines serve as a heartfelt thank you for the work they carried out in those moments and under those conditions. Congratulations and thank you.

# DESCIFRANDO LA MENTE DEL YIHADISTA

*ya disponible*  
EN AMAZON

Islam

Martirio

Injinas

Yihad

Daes  
Al Ibtla

Tagut

Takfir

Al-Hakim

BAHAE EDDINE BOUMNINA



### **Pablo González Gómez**

Member of the Spanish Association of Civil Guards (AEGC), holding the position of National Secretary of Organization. Currently, he is a First Corporal of the Civil Guard. He began his military career in 2002 and subsequently joined the Civil Guard in 2005.

On March 11, 2004, was a day marked by atypicality and emotional intensity. At that time, I was serving in the military in Logroño. However, that day did not necessitate an early rise due to a scheduled nighttime exercise. Upon awakening, I turned on the radio, and as news began to unfold, a series of confusing and distressing reports emerged: a train had exploded, numerous individuals were injured, and so forth.

Feelings of anger and helplessness began to permeate as we absorbed the distressing news. The day seemed ominous. Throughout the afternoon, we did nothing but remain glued to the television, struggling to comprehend the magnitude of what had occurred. While unfortunate terrorist attacks had occurred over many years, none resembled this particular incident, nor the unique experience we underwent on that atypical 11th of March.

It is imperative to commemorate the successes and efficacy demonstrated by the Security Forces and Corps, all the while not forgetting our fallen comrades. The enormous tragedy claimed over 190 lives and left more than 1,400 injured, many of whom sustained severe injuries, thus deeply shaking the entire Spanish populace.

The 11th of March incident occurred merely three days following a general election, thereby poisoning and disrupting the previously serene social coexistence. Subsequent to the attack, appropriate legal and policing policies were established and embraced, aimed at defeating the perpetrators.

While Spain possessed efficient and developed Information and Intelligence units, the novel modality of mass terrorism posed a significant challenge for future procedures and counterterrorism strategies. Additional resources and qualified personnel were deemed necessary to confront this new paradigm of terrorism, this emerging threat which required swift and efficient suppression.

Central Information Units were restructured and peripheral groups were adjusted to enhance existing data and adapt prevention and response efforts. Coordination among all organizations combating this scourge (CNI, CITCO, Guardia Civil, and National Police) was improved.



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Protocols were continually adjusted to maintain short-term preventive functions, medium and long-term information gathering, analysis, and processing. Established procedures were amended to enable prompt decision-making, ensuring seamless communication between operational, intelligence, and enforcement mechanisms. Necessary coordination with Judicial Authorities for arrests or searches with corresponding judicial orders was also maintained.

Fortunately, it was an isolated yet substantial incident. However, it reignited societal and political concerns regarding terrorism, violent radicalization, support for and involvement in terrorist activities. Investigations and operations to prevent and thwart such attacks were intensified. Policies were enacted, incorporating more restrictive and identifying measures for the acquisition and production of certain products. All these efforts were part of an evolving and continuous process aimed at a National Security Strategy, serving as a means to coordinate various elements of the state to ensure the safety of all citizens over time.



### Diego Leonet Mayo

Bachelor's degree in Criminology. President of the Association of Professionals and Students of Criminology of the Basque Country. Delegate in the Basque Country of the Scientific Society of Restorative Justice. Special interest in Transitional Justice, with the direct and indirect victims of the Spanish Civil War as the central focus of my work.. Collaborator with the S.C. Aranzadi, Historical Memory Section, in the exhumation of mass graves from the Civil War and the subsequent process until the delivery of the exhumed remains to their relatives. Promoter and coordinator of the tribute held in February 2022 to the prisoners used as forced labor for the reconstruction of the railway between Gernika-Lumo and Pedernales, and in the expansion of the railway between Pedernales and Bermeo. President of the Organizing Committee of the I Congress of Criminology APECPV/EHPIKE: APPLIED CRIMINOLOGY, in October 2017.

It seems like yesterday, when having breakfast, I began to hear the news about an explosion on a commuter train in Madrid. And then another. And another... The news was confusing; I couldn't understand if a single bomb had detonated or if there were multiple explosions. Or if a train had derailed. Everything was confusion. The only certainty was that "something" had happened, and what exactly that was remained unclear.

Minutes passed, and it seemed that things were starting to become clearer. Multiple explosions had occurred on several commuter trains in Madrid, but there was still much confusion. After a few hours, it was confirmed that there were 10 nearly simultaneous explosions on four trains, hence the initial confusion. The result was the largest terrorist attack ever committed in Spain, with a death toll of 191 (a GEO officer would pass away days later, increasing the number to 192), and over 2,000 injured. It is very difficult to refrain from making some form of political assessment, considering that general elections were scheduled to take place just 3 days after this attack. Initially, the Government of the Popular Party declared that the terrorist group ETA was responsible for the attack. I still remember someone commenting, "If it really was ETA, they definitely lose my support; this cannot be justified." However, police investigation proved that the authorship was the work of a jihadist group.

Physically, the attack was in Madrid, but the fear was felt throughout the entire state. Nothing has been the same since then. Until that moment, if someone saw an abandoned bag on a seat or on the ground, whether in a station or an airport, the norm was to pick it up and take it to lost and found. After March 11, the "normal" response was to quickly move away and call the police. Beyond the primary goal of causing casualties and chaos, the terrorists achieved a much stronger and enduring objective: FEAR. Spanish society suddenly became a frightened society. And not only were we afraid of a loose backpack, but we began to fear the "different," especially if their features indicated an Arab origin.

Logic tells us that the vast majority of migrants from Muslim countries are people seeking a better life than what they had in their home countries. But fear, that sometimes irrational and illogical instinct, as a survival mechanism, makes us fear anyone who is "different." But we forget that there are countries with a majority Muslim population that are not Arab, whose citizens are Caucasians, like us. But we don't fear them.



One consequence of this attack was the increase in security in railway transport. Metal detectors and scanners were installed at major stations through which we had to pass our luggage. Barriers were placed so that only ticketed individuals could access the platforms and trains. It became normal to see private security personnel permanently stationed at stations or on trains. And often, at the country's main stations, we see members of various police forces patrolling the station, heavily armed, not just with their standard issue firearm.

As citizens, we have accepted that this fear implies a decrease in our individual freedom in exchange for collective security. But is this "collective security" real? Could it just be our perception of security?

The increase in security in air and rail transport worldwide has been significant. However, from 2004 until now, the number of terrorist actions globally has remained consistent. What has changed is the method of carrying them out: lone wolves attacking with knives or vehicles; mass shootings; explosions in buses, nightclubs, hotel assaults... Are we really safe? Are we sure that something like this couldn't happen in Spain?

I often wonder: to what extent are we being deceived by the authorities? Let me explain. In Spain, there have been several attacks on police officers with knives. In all these cases, we are told that these individuals have "psychological disorders." In other countries in our surroundings, these same events are treated as "terrorist attacks committed by lone wolves."

One detail to consider is that for several years now, Spain has been permanently at a level 4 alert for terrorist attacks, where level 5 is the highest possible. And sometimes they have "invented" an "increased level 4." Are they afraid to declare the maximum level, and the implications that come with it? Or are they afraid of a population-wide reaction of hysteria?

In addition to this, we must consider the loss of respect for the Security Forces and Corps, where we have reached the extreme point where the word of a "hypothetical offender" (even if everything is recorded on video) holds more value than the word of a police officer. Police officers lack the support of politicians and judges. They prefer to be assaulted rather than repel an attack because they know they will be reported and judged for simply doing their job, for defending themselves or defending us. I reiterate, are we truly secure?

Twenty years have passed, and I believe we have learned very little. We have allowed ourselves to be veiled by hypothetical security, yet fear persists. We still move away from a backpack left on the ground, or seek a place that seems safer if we happen to encounter someone of Arab appearance. And no, that person of Arab appearance is certainly not a terrorist. But the fear remains. So, has sacrificing that part of our individual freedom served any purpose?

I do not have the answer to this question, but an updated criminal policy tailored to real needs seems to me the necessary foundation for achieving genuine security, adjusting laws to the context. And this does not necessarily imply harsher penalties. There are other mechanisms that can be implemented.

Furthermore, it is imperative to restore to the police their status as agents of authority, which is currently so disparaged. This necessitates the support of politicians and the judiciary.



### Maite Muiña

Degree in criminology and is a communicative mediator for the deafblind, offering workshops on basic Spanish sign language. For years, she has been dedicated to the fashion industry, working as a model, designer, and costume designer for film and television.

I vividly recall the 11th of March, 2004. It was a Thursday, and I was preparing to go to work. My destination was Serrano Street around 10 in the morning. However, the public transportation in my municipality on the outskirts of Madrid had complex schedules, requiring one to leave home with an hour and a half buffer due to numerous transfers until reaching the commuter train station that led to Atocha. My work routine didn't entail daily commutes; it was only necessary when there was an interview, an appointment with a VIP, or new clothing arrivals at the showroom of the fashion brand I worked for. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, I was always at the showroom, so if I didn't drive due to the difficulty of parking in downtown Madrid, the train was the best option to reach Atocha and then Recoletos.

However, I didn't leave home that day. Explosions had paralyzed Madrid. Initially, confusion gripped everyone; swiftly, television programs and radio stations informed us that several trains had exploded. These were commuter trains heading towards Atocha, one of the busiest stations, serving both short and long-distance routes. Workers and students crowded the platforms and trains during those hours from Monday to Friday. It was evident that a terrible tragedy had occurred, yet through the media, we struggled to comprehend the magnitude of what had transpired. As we learned about the stations and trains that had been targeted, our first instinct was to call acquaintances whom we knew might be there at that time, desperately hoping for their answer, slowly tracking down colleagues and loved ones who were likely on those trains or at the station.

People from all over Madrid converged on the affected areas to help, despite lacking a specific protocol; everything functioned remarkably well. The injured aided in rescuing those trapped, answered phones—everyone pitched in and proved immensely helpful.

In major catastrophes, accidents, or attacks that we were unfortunately accustomed to in our country, citizens have always promptly engaged in helping. To this day, after speaking with forensic doctors who were involved in all identification efforts, they concur on the difficulty of such harsh situations where there isn't a registry of how many people were aboard those trains or in the vicinity of the attack sites. Survivors sometimes suffer delayed effects (hearing problems, trauma, psychological damage), which may persist throughout their lives. These cruel events leave long-lasting psychological scars on citizens, and the specter of a possible recurrence looms over cities and the population for a considerable time.



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Following the 11M attacks, protocols for action and coordination of teams in such situations were enhanced. Days later, when the terrorist cell hiding in an apartment in Leganés was cornered, they detonated explosives, killing a member of the Special Operations Group (GEO), thus increasing the death toll. Citizens demanded significant changes in society and national security from politicians. It became known that the intelligence service had warned the government of the imminent danger of an attack in Spain. The National Intelligence Center (CNI) had issued a report in 2003 on the jihadist threat.

Politically, the massive citizen mobilization in the immediate days after March 11, on the 12th and 13th of March 2004, was more impactful than previous protests against the Iraq war, making it clear to the institutions that legislative changes and different approaches against such attacks were essential. National elections were held on March 14, with the highest number of voters turning out, totaling 26 million votes. Unlike other international democracies that have faced attacks of this or greater magnitude, our country experienced significant social fracture. The mutual accusations between the two main political parties, coupled with the government's failure to resolve several emergencies during its tenure, led to high levels of division and tension in Spain.

The security measures taken in the aftermath and legislative changes regarding terrorism and radicalization have instilled a sense of confidence in the powers and a feeling of protection by governments that have managed to agree on these measures. The Organic Law 2/2015 of the Spanish Penal Code is also a significant part of the reforms implemented to effect changes in the penal system.

Following the 11M attacks, Spain implemented the Antiterrorism Prevention and Protection Plan on March 9, 2005, establishing a multi-level alert scale for terrorist threats. The National Antiterrorist Alert Level, initially comprising 3 levels, is overseen by the Ministry of the Interior through the State Security Secretariat. In 2015, the scale was set at 5 levels, currently at level 4 of risk.

The media played a beneficial role in the case of the 11M attacks, tactfully providing updates on the investigation. Whether defined as caution or genuine fear, no one encountering an abandoned backpack or suitcase would pick it up without notifying security personnel or the police.

I lost much on March 11th—friends and coworkers whom I'll never forget, for whom I still shed tears, albeit now in a more intimate manner, tearless, and I support a friend who suffered severe auditory and visual sequelae whenever possible. He is a reflection of what was stolen from us that day.



REGE CAROLO III  
ANNO  
MDCCLXXVIII



### **Luís Martínez Gavilán**

Licensed by the Ministry of Interior in Private Security Management, Escorting, and Security Guarding. Holds a Master's degree in Security Management and a postgraduate degree from the Department of Criminology at the Faculty of Law of the University of Barcelona. Accredited Private Security Instructor by the Ministry of Interior, specializing in Personal Protection. He was a member of the Armed Forces from 1987 to 2002, trained in various centers and specializing in the Security and Defense branch. Experienced in the protection of high authorities, as well as commanding Units and Intervention Sections of the Air Police of the Air Force. Provides consultancy and teaching in Security and Defense. He is a Member and Member of the Board of Directors of ANSPAP, the National Association of Accredited Private Security Teachers. Additionally, he is a Member and Member of the Board of Directors of ADISPO, the Association of Private Security Directors.

The Seed of Hatred Shall Not Grow in the Forest of Kindness.

The Global Jihadist Terrorist Movement, hereinafter referred to as GJTM, a scourge stemming from the jihadist terrorist Salafist current and other Islamist terrorist currents, holds as its main creed that the Muslim community must fully submit to the governance of God.

According to the movement, the Muslim community must accept the provisions of Islamic Sharia and implement them without any exceptions. In the event that Muslim governments reject this, it is obligatory to fight against them. For the GJTM, governments that are more open to progress are "apostates of Islam, raised at the colonial tables".

This last notion, "colonial tables", leads the Islamist terrorist jihadist movement to extend beyond attacking those Muslim governments and to attack non-Muslim governments. One of the drops staining terrorist jihad, Armed Jihad, is the fact that often attacks are perpetrated against Muslims.

Because these governments, as their slogans say: "Only bear Islamic names, claim to pray in Islam, fast, and assert they are Muslims, but they must be crushed." In Islam, the lives of the prophets Samuel, Moses, David, or Jesus exist. Islam calls them "Reformers" and labels them as bearers of a divine mission: the word of God through Holy Books. But also, Islam's teachings point fingers at wars, massacres, genocides, and even bad Muslim and non-Muslim states' policies for the destruction of these books, especially the Word of God.

Historically, in the Islamist terrorist jihadist movement, factors such as the damage caused by empires that invaded holy lands, especially the British Empire in the past century and more recently the United States and currently the Western world in general, including Europe, are added as culprits. To introduce the concept of Jihad in mosques and some madrasas, children are asked a simple question and given a brief explanation: Is anger and wrath something good or bad? The answer is simple and very easy to dissolve into terrorist jihadist thoughts: "When used with and for justice, it is good because Jihad is the greatest for Peace".



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This concept ensures, in the face of eventualities, risks, or threats, that the peace achieved through Violent Jihad secures Islam against the enemy. A concept that is not new. It emerged in the early Islamic movements of the 1960s, a sprout of the armed Jihad seed, following the Palestinian revolution of the 1930s. In the following decades, the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1970s and 1980s fueled the call of the holy warriors, the Mujahideen, who flocked en masse to the call of God.

Young men who had fought in Afghanistan and occupied territories were seasoned in the Balkans, now adults. The assassination of the president of Egypt demonstrated to the world that the words of overthrowing impious states were deeds that could be consummated through the word of God and not through powerful armies but rather through simple soldiers serving Islam.

The children of Palestine, the infancy of Jihadism, demonstrated their faith by confronting Israeli invading tanks with stones, defending sacred land in the Intifada. Coinciding episodes such as the assassination attempt on the president of the United States or Pope John Paul, served the thinkers of Jihad to maximize their impact on the ideology's propaganda. The message was clear: No one could escape Allah.

The 1990s, for the GJTM, was a period where Muslims were humiliated and massacred by impious forces. The massacres, wars, and genocide they were victims of were used in global discourse to recall the destruction of the holy books of Abraham and Moses, arguing that "the West" also sought to destroy Islam. The call to Jihad, while timid in the First Gulf War, reached very high Jihad levels in Bosnia. The response, from all parts of the world, was similar if we compare it to the one received with the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War. Those who had fought against the Soviet invader in Afghanistan packed their bags to make the sacrifice for Allah in lands they considered their own Islamic territory.

The disappearance of the Iron Curtain created new countries, Muslims with extremist ideological currents, like Turkmenistan, where Islamic terrorist Jihadism saw not only inspiration from the Jihad in Bosnia but also centers for recruitment and recruitment to the cause. The Taliban National Movement and the Union with Al Qaeda were considered, in Islamic coffee shops, a divine mandate union, and the union between the Saudi family and the Salafi Wahhabi tribes of the Najd desert was recalled.

As an added flavor to all the nourishment that devoured Jihadism during the 1990s, at the beginning of the era, the United States stepped into Kuwait in the form of military force. Despite being one of the most liberal Muslim countries, the Jihadist Movement considered that Islam was under attack.

Although criticisms were directed at Saudi Arabia for remaining "timid and cowardly" in the face of such audacity, the most faithful scholars and one of them at the helm, Prince Osama Bin Laden, criticized Saudi Arabia's position and its friendship with the United States very harshly.

And then came September 11, 2001.

The Sword over Satan, that's how the attack against the United States was mentioned when the news spread across the Islamic world. Jihad, composed of four levels, the second is dedicated to the fight against Satan. It must be fought with a sword, and this gesture, this tragedy for the Western world, was pointed out by the global jihadist movement as the greatest gesture of sacrifice and struggle to defend Islam, with all the consequences and evolutions of the so-called Armed Jihad that we know.



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It has been 20 years since the sword of Satan fell in Madrid. During these decades, well-known episodes of our history, such as the overthrow of the GJTM in Syria and Iraq, the war in Libya, the Sahel cauldron, or the multiple attacks committed on European soil, including our nation, have taught us that the GJTM has evolved, maximizing the tools that progress and democracies have created, but also feeding on social and economic factors that dilute its *raison d'être* into a deadly injection: violent radicalization.

This dangerous phenomenon, in all its forms, represents a threat to our security, our social cohesion, and our fundamental values. It is crucial to understand that violent radicalization does not arise out of nowhere. It has deep roots that often feed on inequality, exclusion, alienation, and lack of opportunities. This is where the GJTM and its extremist ideologies find fertile ground in those who feel marginalized or unfairly treated by society.

Our response to violent radicalization must be multifaceted. First and foremost, we must address the underlying causes that fuel it. This implies tirelessly working to build a fairer and more inclusive society, where everyone has equal opportunities and feels valued and respected.

We must strengthen our prevention and early detection systems. This means investing in education, integration programs, and promoting intercultural dialogue. We must work closely with local communities to identify and address signs of radicalization before they turn into violent acts.

But we must also be firm in law enforcement and in the fight against violent extremism. Zero tolerance towards those who promote or perpetrate acts of violence in the name of an ideology is essential to protect our society and our citizens.

However, our response cannot be limited to repression. We must also offer attractive alternatives to radicalization. This involves promoting values of tolerance, diversity, and mutual respect. We must offer opportunities for civic and social participation that channel the energy and passion of our youth constructively and positively.

Ultimately, the fight against violent radicalization is the responsibility of all of us. As citizens, as community leaders, as educators, or as authorities, we all have a role to play in building a safer and more peaceful future for all. In this challenge, we cannot afford to fail. We must unite in our determination to reject violent radicalization in all its forms and to build a world where peace, justice, and dignity prevail for all.

Now, in a globalized world, we must recognize that terrorism knows no borders or limits. It does not discriminate based on race, religion, or nationality. It is a dark force that threatens our security, our freedom, and our most sacred values. Terrorism feeds on intolerance, ignorance, and hatred. It exploits divisions within our societies and seeks to undermine our confidence in humanity. But we cannot allow fear to paralyze us or divide us.

When terrorism strikes, staying united and firm in our determination to defend our principles and our way of life strengthens us and prevents the GJTM from achieving its objectives.

The fight against terrorism is neither easy nor simple. It requires a collective and coordinated response at all levels: local, national, and international. We must strengthen our intelligence and law enforcement capabilities to prevent attacks and bring those responsible to justice.



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Recently, the fight against radicalization has been included as an important point in the National Security Strategy and especially in the Counterterrorism Security Strategies.

But the response to terrorism cannot be limited to security measures. We must also address the underlying causes that fuel it. This involves combating radicalization, promoting social and economic inclusion, and fostering intercultural and religious dialogue.

Education is a powerful tool in this fight. We must teach our young people to reject violence and to value diversity and mutual respect. We must counter extremist propaganda and indoctrination.

To do this, we must remain steadfast in our determination not to succumb to fear or intimidation. Terrorism may strike hard, but it can never defeat our resolve and our humanity.

Let us remember that the strength and resilience of our human spirit were tested in Madrid and Barcelona.

Twenty years ago, we told the world that together we are stronger than any threat we face.

In memory of all the victims of terrorism and in honor of those who tirelessly fight against it, our determination to build a safer, fairer, and more peaceful world for all is a daily task to be assumed, and one to which I dedicate part of my time.

Thanks to AL GHURABÁ Magazine and especially to David Garriga for the opportunity to contribute a grain of sand to this magnificent initiative, undoubtedly a robust tree that does not allow the seed of hatred to grow.



### Joaquín del Toro Jimenez

Director of Corporate Security at Sareb, where he primarily focuses on the protection of people and assets, particularly real estate assets. He is a Consultant in Comprehensive Security and Corporate Intelligence. He is a member of the State Security Forces and Corps (FCSE) in reserve status, having served in Intervention and Protection Units. He has held management and project management positions in both security companies and security departments. He is a Director and Security Chief certified by the Ministry of Interior. He is the lead auditor for ISO 22301:2015 "Business Continuity Management." He is also a Certified Protection Officer (CPO) by IFPO and a member of ISACA certified in CDPSE—Certified Data Privacy Solutions Engineer. He holds a Diploma in International Relations from S.E.I. and a diploma in Leadership and Security from the Rafael del Pino Foundation. He is a professor in the Course of Security Direction and Management at UNED / in CEF-UDIMA.

I have not had to undergo significant memorization exercise to recall where I was at that moment, as there are days and situations that are unforgettable. At that time, I was directing the security detail of a prominent individual, and we were heading towards the Velázquez hotel area in Madrid from the northern region. My charge had arranged to meet with the then Director of Radio Televisión Española, as they occasionally did, to converse and catch up.

That meeting never took place. With the first news heard on the radio, we realized the magnitude of the event, which disrupted the plans of many people, including ours, as we faced that sad day. It is inevitable to state that this event has influenced decision-making processes since then. Certainly, professional actions regarding protection and security decisions changed, or rather, were heightened in response to the situation. I have also felt a significant change in perception and how I approach my daily routine since then.

We must not forget that we all experienced an initial shock upon learning of the news, and the silence that simultaneously silenced society, witnessing up close and experiencing what we sometimes saw on television and thought would never happen on our streets.

However, paralyzed by the heinous attack, we were able to witness the greatness of Spanish society, with citizens aiding the victims and trying to alleviate the pain and suffering of many. I cannot say the same for the political class, where the unity that the entire population would have wanted and desired was not reflected, to the extent that to this day, there remains a division, to put it mildly, rather than acknowledging political and partisan confrontation.

As Director of Security, several changes occurred in my professional approach after the 11-M. This included reinforcement of self-protection measures, further education in Criminal Behavioral Profiling and Analysis, attendance in training courses on jihadist terrorism and Radical Movements, complementing the foundational training in combating ETA terrorism after belonging to the State Security Forces and Corps, specifically a frontline unit.



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Spanish society was accustomed to the terrorist barbarism of ETA, albeit with the connotations and variables that marked such attacks, often targeting Security Forces, Military personnel, Politicians, etc., and sometimes affecting their immediate surroundings, as in the case of the attack on the Cuartel de Casetas barracks in Zaragoza, and also perpetrating major indiscriminate attacks and targeting all kinds of citizens, such as the one in the Hipercor in Barcelona, but the overall impact generated by the 11-M attack had not been experienced before.

It was logical to think, as it was demonstrated, that within the professional security sphere, everything would be reinforced from that day onward. Measures were strengthened in facilities, police checks at any point in the geography, implementation of cameras, and monitoring individuals upon their arrival in Spain.

A myriad of measures were also adopted by the private sector, each in the facilities they protected, and by the public sector, completing the remaining spectrum of increased security measures in all areas.

I believe we can agree that the measures taken after the 11-M, such as the swift dismantling of the assassin cell responsible for the attack and the rigorous control of Spanish explosives, further bolstered the public's trust in all those agents who, day by day, give their best so that all of us living in this country feel secure, regardless of our political or religious beliefs.

In conclusion, within the sadness evoked by the memory of that fateful day, I am left with the lesson learned from the unity of society, the support and care for the injured, the mourning, and the accompaniment of the deceased, as if they were our own, and with the efforts of private and public entities to reinforce the necessary measures so that such an act does not recur in our Spain.



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### Ricardo Ruiz

Director of the School of the 3 Arms. A career military officer with 25 years of service. Instructor of Precision Shooter Teams at the Steyr Academy. Instructor of both long and short firearm shooting. Holds a University Specialization in Weapons Monitoring, Police Shooting, and Defense. TCCC and TECC Instructor certified by NAEMT. Professional experience in international missions. Expert instructor in the University Expertise programs of "International Security Operations," "Police Operational Intervention," and "Combat Healthcare in Operations."

That day 20 years ago I was on maneuvers.

We were preparing an exercise with the section when we found out through phone calls from some relatives to our colleagues. After that, in the following days, the Armed Forces were deployed for surveillance of sensitive locations. The population of the country welcomed the deployment of military units on National Territory very positively. There was a certain degree of anger noticeable in the population for what had happened, accompanied by very strongly worded phrases.

With the passage of time and generational changes, those feelings of pain have been lost, and it remains as something of the past or as something that would have happened in another country. Cultivating a culture of security and defense is important. Not only in the members of the Armed Forces or Security Forces, but also in the citizen.

After the experience of NATO military operations, the use of tourniquets by police and emergency medical services has become widespread. However, today we can see defibrillators in shopping centers, but not bleeding control kits.

After having suffered the 11M, that could be an important lesson learned. Events like those suffered should serve to improve our response to these attacks, from the citizen to the Armed Forces and Security Forces.

Yes, the citizen must participate and do their part. Something as basic as bleeding control techniques can mean saved lives and families staying together.

Protocols such as the scientific publication Consenso Victoria show how these protocols are applied and who participates in them; and they allow us to provide an effective response in cases of extreme violence. Violence exists.

Not having a plan to counter it does not mean being peaceful, it means being harmless. Our society is peaceful and to preserve peace it must strive to develop its culture of security and defense.



### **Vicente Martín Melchor**

CEO of ADDENDO, a company specialized in training solutions in the social area: minors, equality, gender, mediation, and self-protection consultancy. He is a criminologist.

On March 11, 2004, I was meeting with the CEO of the company DELTA XIII, Mr. Vicente de la Cruz in Pozuelo de Alarcón, Madrid. Members of our respective work teams informed us that they were working on a project regarding security and crime prevention.

We were left stunned as we watched and listened through the media to those heartbreaking images of the trains, people running on the tracks, emergency services, law enforcement, etc.

It was a moment of confusion, fear, and insecurity. The first thought that came to my mind was whether any family member or friend had taken a train in Madrid at that time.

The terrorist attack in Madrid marked a turning point in the long history of terrorist barbarism in Spain. The magnitude of the tragedy, with 190 fatalities and over 1,400 injured, caused a collective shock with repercussions around the world. Spain is combating an asymmetric threat by equipping itself with appropriate legal and police means through international cooperation. The rule of law provides powerful means to provide appropriate responses and effectively establish the preventive security that citizens expect. The implementation of appropriate policies to combat those who express themselves solely through murder enjoys the majority support of society, regardless of the acronyms used by these terrorist groups.

It is worth remembering the successes of Spanish institutions in the fight against terrorism. In a rule of law, the major equation to solve is how to defend against this scourge without undermining the rights and freedoms of citizens.

Spanish society, with international support, reacted with great concern, expressing in demonstrations of more than ten million people their rejection of terrorism and their desire to live in peace within the framework of coexistence established by the constitution.





### **Mustapha Kaddari Kaddari**

Head of Service and Coordinator of Translators and Interpreters in the Judicial Organs of the Province of Malaga.

President of the Intercultural Association "BARAKA".

It was like any other day for any citizen of the world. And I'm referring to those of us who don't usually bring our personal problems to work and try to go with a light backpack.

Everything had started in the morning, very early, on that fateful Thursday, March 11, 2004. That morning should never have existed. I was performing my duties as usual, as an interpreter and translator in the judicial organs of Malaga. Suddenly, news of the catastrophe began to arrive through the courthouse corridors, from the mouths of officials, lawyers, judges... Confusion, conflicting information, denials... But there was only one thing certain: it was something that surpassed any previous experience. And let me tell you, in the courts, matters of great relevance, harshness, and social impact are dealt with: homicides, murders, assaults of all kinds, etc... But none had the magnitude of this tragedy, and therefore surpassed everything humanly imaginable.

My first reaction was to pick up the phone and call my relatives who were living at that time in Guadalajara and Madrid, while praying that none of them were on those commuter trains. It is the first feeling that a human being has: to worry about loved ones, and once you are certain that they are safe, you are overwhelmed by helplessness, anger, and sadness for those who have not been as fortunate as yours.

March 11th has marked a before and after for all of us, in our tranquility when using any means of transportation and in our trust in others, especially for those of us who are of Arab descent, as we have become the target of all eyes and are subjected to suspicion and control, merely because of belonging to the same race or religion as some terrorists, a fact that violates the principle of equality advocated by our Constitution.

On the other hand, that fateful day marked a turning point in Spain's collective memory; the attack shocked Spanish society, which united in one voice to condemn terrorism. There was a great emotional impact, deliberate harm against people who have nothing to do with politics and who are terribly harmed for no reason.



## SPECIAL 11-M

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I have always wondered if such an attack could have been avoided, and I say this from a professional perspective, as I collaborated as a translator and analyst with the Ministry of Defense. In my opinion, there should be greater coordination among the state security forces and bodies, and in turn with the intelligence services. Unfortunately, at that time, Spain was immersed in an electoral campaign, and the "anything goes" was probably used to change the voting intention of a large part of the population. And this happened just 3 days before the general elections.

Terrorism will always be terrorism, regardless of its origin: ETA or Al-Qaeda. What had happened was already enough tragedy to be additionally used as a political weapon. And they forgot for a few days (the most important for the affected ones, the 192 victims of the barbarism) that the main thing was not precisely to win elections.

Terrorism is fought with a State pact and not by politicizing a scourge, by pursuing the intellectual authors and with more resources for the state security forces, by improving international agreements on terrorism, and, above all, with the countries considered strongholds of jihadist terrorism.

Fortunately, today, there has been an improvement in security mechanisms to detect, early on, possible terrorist cells, combating indoctrination, which is the first step to becoming a potential threat to the country. All of this to contribute to the recovery of coexistence and tolerance in Spain.

Finally, I would like to emphasize one issue, and perhaps it could be the remedy for this malaise called hatred, ideological and religious extremism, and I refer to intercultural integration in Spain. There is a need for "integration policies to cease being policies for immigrants and to become more general policies."

Testimony of MUSTAPHA KADDARI in memory of the victims of March 11th. Rest in peace.



### Silvia Tarragona García

Throughout my professional career of over 35 years in journalistic practice, I have narrated, through Radio Nacional de España, pivotal moments that, in one way or another, turned our world upside down, both nationally and in Catalonia.

The Iraq War. The fall of Saddam Hussein. The majority of Daesh's actions and the televised executions of journalists and aid workers... But if we speak from a global perspective, both the attack on the Twin Towers and the 11-M, I directed special programs for Radio 4, Radio Nacional de España in Catalonia, deeply marked both my personal and professional life. Life unfolds through the radio, and in the public sphere, we have the obligation and the vocation to explain it with rigor and objectivity.

This date, along with that of September 11th, is the one that marked me the most professionally speaking. I was on the radio about to start the program. A lot of tension, a lot of information, and headlines that I had the obligation to look at over and over again. Contrast and contrast a thousand times. Twenty years ago, everything related to the immediacy of information was not so easy, given the magnitude of the tragedy. An attack that caught all of us, journalists included, off guard due to its brutality. The reaction was one of perplexity and then of serenity and pragmatism to talk about what we knew and to know what we were talking about.

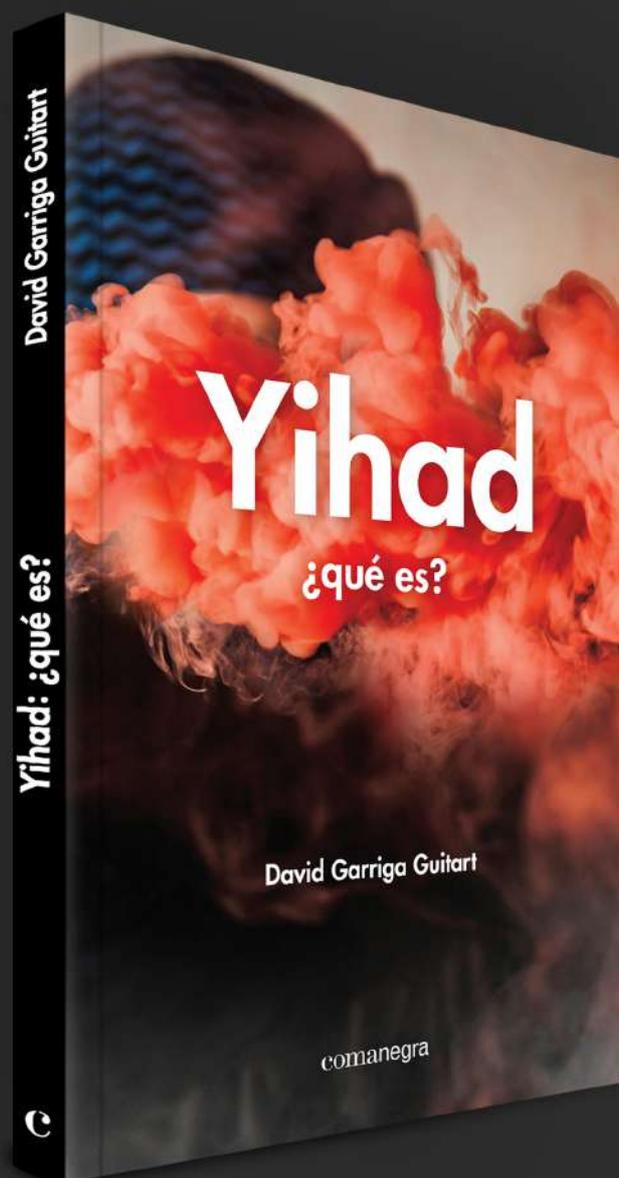
March 11th, like the attack on the Twin Towers before it, has changed EVERYTHING. Our world is different. More insecure, but also, and this is what worries me the most, more distrustful of the other, of what we don't understand or sometimes don't want to understand. With "preachers" who lecture on a subject with many perspectives and, for this reason, has many different sensitivities. The decisions that have been made for the common good understand that they are necessary, from my point of view, they have not been cross-cutting. Political changes on this issue have been from a purely political point of view. I believe that the vision should be more global and less partial.

Decisions for the common security were necessary, but they have affected a lot in the perception that the citizens have of the various realities that are part of a world and a society that is biased and that since then, due to partial information, makes some distrust the different, and here we, the media, have a great pedagogical task to do. We must not only inform, but also explain with time, moderation, and objectivity.

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David Garriga Guitart

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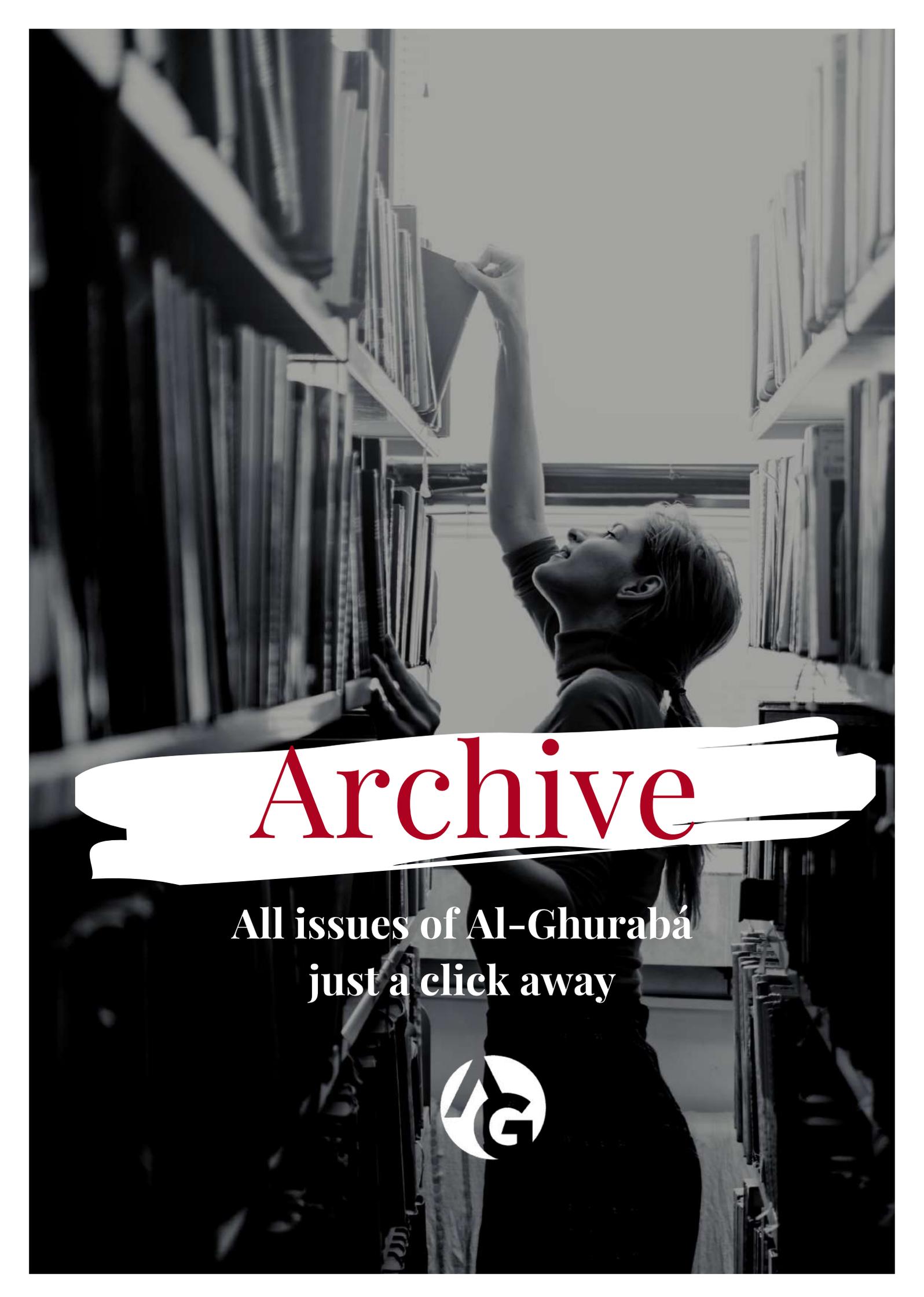
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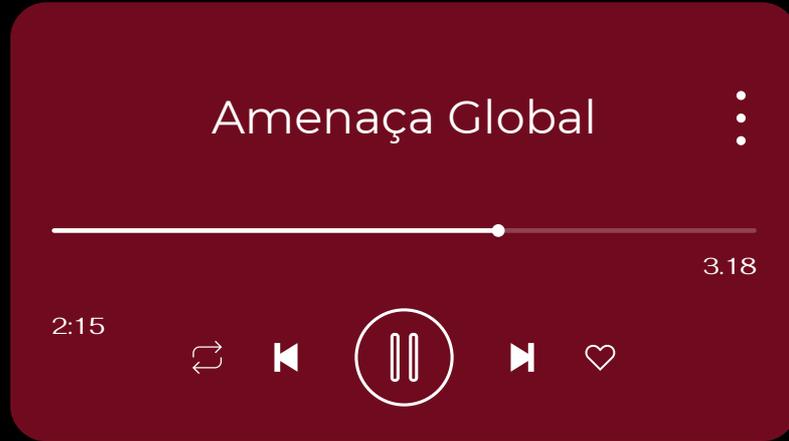
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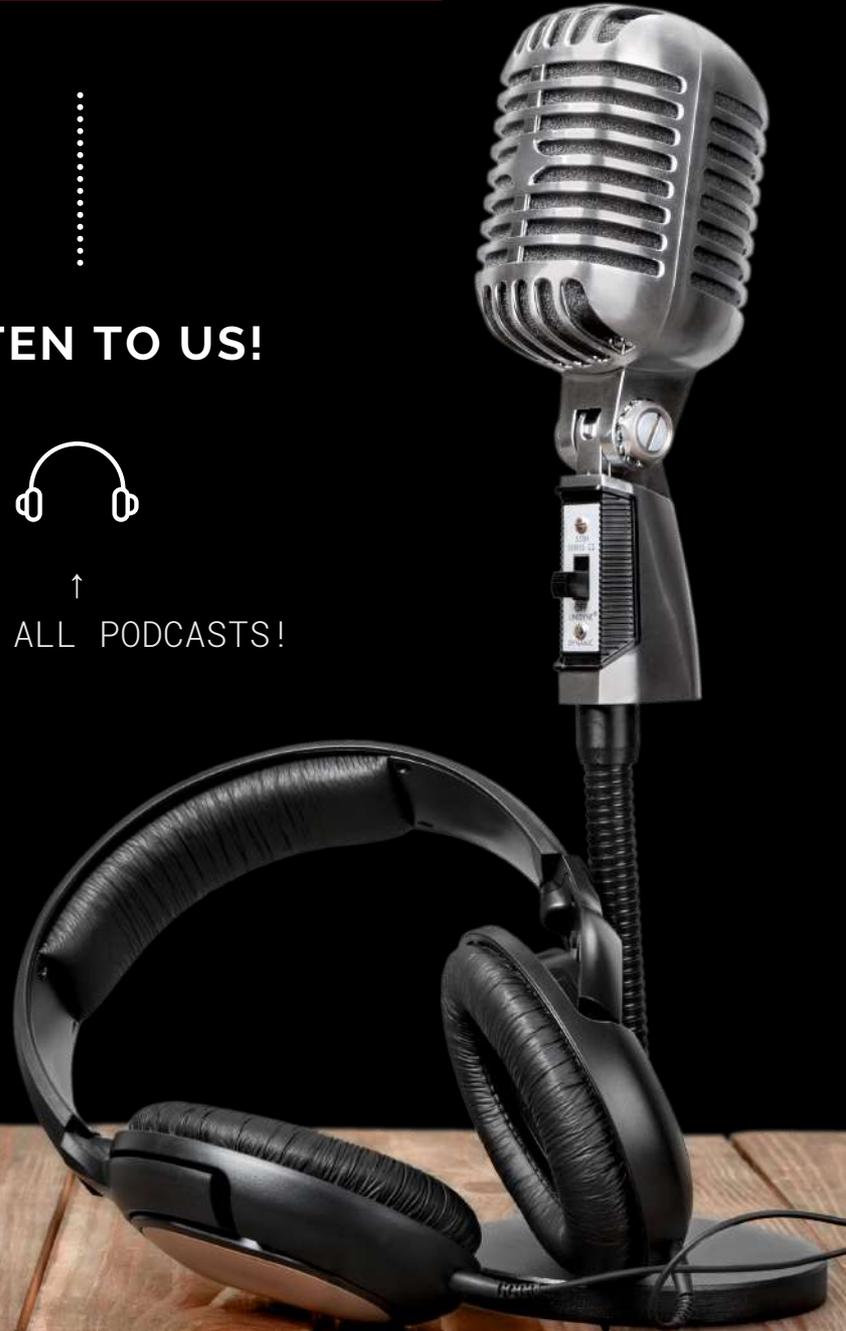
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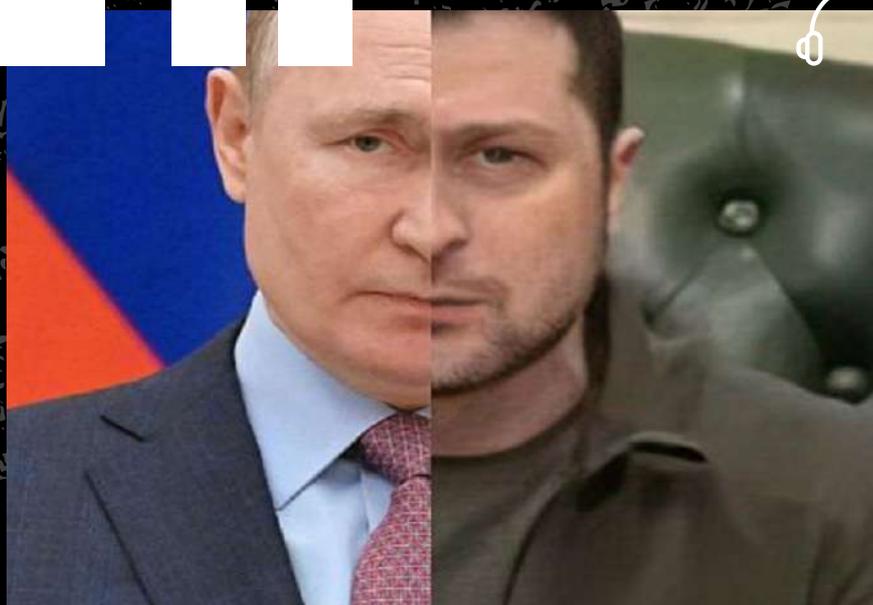
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Gabriel Garroum, Graduat en Ciències Polítiques i de l'Administració i Màster en Política d'Orient Mitjà.

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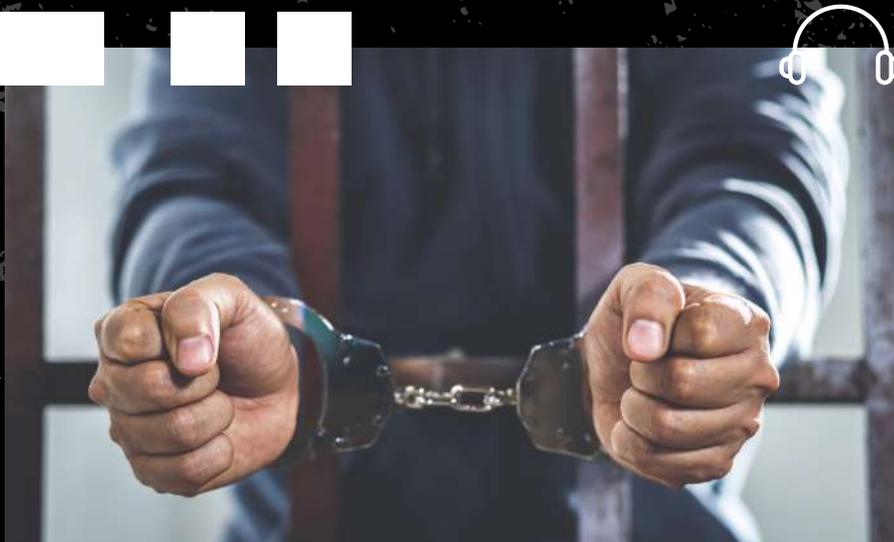
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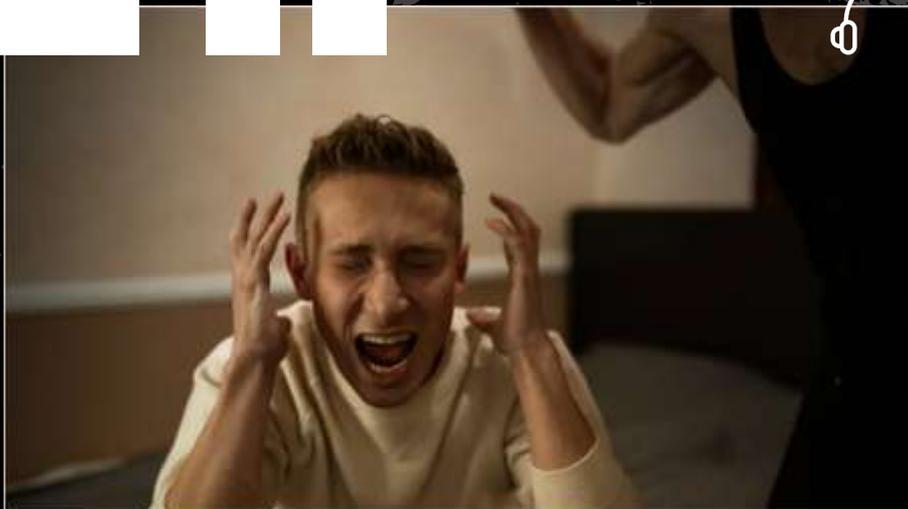


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